









and Britain, the august mother of free nations, will not hesitate to confer on her great Eastern dependency the priceless boon of self-government, which will mark the perpetual union between the two countries, and which will be fraught with blessings to India and glory to England.

SPEECHES  
OF  
BABU SURENDRA NATH BANERJEA,

1880-84.

*EDITED BY*  
RAM CHANDRA PALIT.

VOL. II.

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**Calcutta:**  
PUBLISHED BY JOGESH CHANDRA BANERJEA,  
CANNING LIBRARY, 55, COLLEGE STREET.

1885.

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**CALCUTTA**

Printed by P. M. Soor & Co.,  
Crown Press, 14, Duff Street.

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## STATUS OF THE BENGAL TENANCY.

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*The following address on the Status of the Bengal Tenantry was delivered by Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea at a numerously attended meeting of the Bethune Society held in the Theatre of the Medical College, Calcutta on Thursday, the 29th March, 1883.*

GENTLEMEN,

I HAVE for a long time been wanting an opportunity such as the one which has now presented itself to me through the courtesy of your Secretary and of your Committee. I use the language of sober truth when I say that I can think of no question more important, none more calculated profoundly to secure the happiness of the many millions of my countrymen than the one which, at the present moment, engages the attention of the Supreme Council. Your Civil Service Question, your Vernacular Press Act, even your Jurisdiction Bill dwindle into utter nothingness when compared with the momentous character of the problem, with which we are now confronted. "The nation dwells in the cottage", is the memorable utterance of England's greatest living orator, and truly speaking the agricultural community of this province form the back-bone, the pith and marrow of its vast and multitudinous population. The *Observer* of a nation's history cares not to cast his eyes upon the glitter of courts, the pomp of capitals, the ostentation of the great,

or even upon the fascinations of beauty. From these he abstracts himself, and in the loneliness of the quiet village, surrounded by the homely faces of the peasants, he observes the nation, their character, their temper and disposition, and pronounces upon them the solemn but inexorable verdict of history. By your agricultural population, by their character and disposition, and not by those of your educated countrymen, shall you and your nation be judged. You talk of political rights and of national aspirations. You are accustomed to use very high-flown language in connection with them. But let me ask you in all seriousness, what are your political rights and national aspirations worth—what value can you set upon them, when the vast bulk of your agricultural community are sunk in the most abject poverty, living from hand to mouth, leading a precarious existence, unable to bear the stress of hard times and are decimated by thousands and hundreds of thousands in seasons of famine? A great writer, the father of modern zoology, the immortal Cuvier has remarked somewhere in his writings that famines are impossible in this age. Little did he know that in the far East, ~~there was~~ a land abounding with milk and honey, a land which was said to be the granary of the East, the Paradise of the world, the ~~garden~~ of Asia, where famines were among the commonest of occurrences! To us has been reserved the honour—if honour indeed it be—of presenting to the world at this age, the somewhat unscientific phenomenon of famines. But how are we to explain these awful visitations—what is there to account for their recurrence? The explanation is apparent on the surface. Under the *Pax Britannica* which in one sense is more complete than even the *Pax Romana*, for it is less liable to internal disturbances, the reign of ~~anarchy~~ has terminated and the empire of peace has been established throughout the broad dominions of the Queen in the East. The result has been that the growth

of population has received an unwonted impetus. We are fast treading upon the margin of subsistence. The demand for food is greatly in excess of the supply. There are more mouths to feed than there is food for them. Hence poverty and destitution, and hence famines. That pernicious social custom which prevails among us, and which requires that every man must marry has added to the complexity of the situation. Every man must marry, whether or not he has the means of maintaining a family. Such is the ordinance of our society and the injunction of our religion. Never was a social injunction or a religious mandate more unreasonable, or more entirely in conflict with the plainest principles of nature and the injunctions of the Divine Law. No man should marry, until he has the means of maintaining a family. This is what Nature enjoins and the Divine Law sanctions. But we here in Bengal are violating every day and every hour the plainest precepts of the Natural and the Divine Law. And God is a jealous God. Nature revenges herself with compound interest upon the violators of her Law. And what has been the result? A feeble, weak and emaciated progeny, unsuited to the highest purposes of man's existence, peoples this vast, this fair and beautiful province.

Such are the causes of famine, and of national poverty. And yet it must be obvious that the cravings of hunger must first be appeased before the aspirations of the soul can claim attention. Upon the broad and unassailable basis of a nation's material prosperity must rise the fabric of its political advancement and moral greatness. I venture to assert without any hesitation that the attainment of political freedom is impossible, on the part of a nation, stricken down by hunger and suffering from malarious fever. It is only when a nation have achieved a certain degree of material prosperity that they can rise to an appreciation of their political rights or

of the last representative of an ancient line of kings. The self-same year witnessed in India the triumph of principles, round which many a keenly-contested fight has been waged by the advocates of opposing schools. What then is this memorable document? What are its terms and conditions? What were the rights which, under it, the Government conceded to the zemindars? How has the great Settlement affected the happiness of the many millions of my countrymen? These are burning questions. I cannot hope to do justice to them all. I can only briefly allude to them in the course of my address. The examination of these questions carries the mind back to the early days of British rule, and we are led to inquire as to what was the status of the ryot, before the Permanent Settlement? Such an inquiry is not one purely of theoretical interest. It is pregnant with practical results. For the Permanent Settlement is a veritable bone of contention; and the rent-literature of the period previous to the Settlement throws a flood of light upon that historical document. I may here mention, once for all, that a great many difficulties have arisen from the mixing up of Eastern and Western ideas and from the attempt to invest in Western phraseology Eastern ideas, which were, at the time, but imperfectly understood. What then was the status of the ryot before the Permanent Settlement? It appears from an examination of the records of those times that previous to the Permanent Settlement, the *khud-khast* ryot, the resident cultivator of the village, held land at an established rate, fixed, not indeed by competition, but by custom, and that so long as the Government demand remained the same, the ryot was not liable to pay any enhanced rate. This was the status of the ryot before the Permanent Settlement, and in that status he was left undisturbed by the Government. Let it be recorded, to the lasting glory of the British Government,

that from the earliest period of its history, it has evinced the deepest concern and the utmost solicitude for the welfare of the ryots. In the year 1769 the Government promulgated a Resolution, the first of its kind, in which they took occasion to remark, "that our object is not the increase of rents or the accumulation of demands, but solely by fixing such as are legal, explaining and abolishing such as, are fraudulent and unauthorized, not only to redress the ryot's present grievances, but to secure him from all further invasions of his property."

That was in 1769. Before seven years had elapsed the Governor-General had another opportunity of testifying his concern for the welfare of the ryots. In 1776, the Governor-General in forming a Board, for revenue purposes, observed:— "Besides the immediate duty of this office, which I have above described, and which I suppose to be indispensably necessary and essential to the formation of an equal Settlement, many other points of inquiry are also useful to secure to the ryots the perpetual and undisturbed possession of their lands, and to guard them against arbitrary evictions."

Again in 1781, the Governor-General in sanctioning a plan of settlement framed by the Revenue Committee expressed a desire to afford every relief and ease both to the ryot and zemindar, consistent with and conformable to the ancient constitution of the country. The Permanent Settlement was promulgated in March 1793. But on the eve of the Permanent Settlement, and only four months before it, in September 1792, the Court of Directors thus observed:—

"We therefore wish it to have it distinctly understood that while we confirm to the landholders the possession of the districts which they now hold, and subject only to the rent now settled and while we disclaim any interference with respect to the situation of the ryots, or the sums paid by them, with any view to any addition of revenue to ourselves, we expressly reserve the right which clearly

belongs to us as sovereigns, of interposing our authority in making from time to time all such regulations as may be necessary to prevent the ryots being improperly disturbed in their possessions or loaded with unwarrantable exactions." This was said by the Court of Directors on the 9th of September 1792, just four months before the conclusion of the Permanent Settlement. And is it to be believed, for one moment, that the Government, all on a sudden, forgetting itself and forgetting the maxims which had hitherto guided its policy, in a moment of strange infatuation, delivered up the ryots, bound hand and foot, to the tender mercies of the zemindar? It did no such thing, and the examination of the Literature of the Permanent Settlement will prove the truth of my contention. I have already quoted the despatch of the Court of Directors recorded on the eve of the Permanent Settlement. But the Regulations of the Permanent Settlement are yet more emphatic. Section 8 of Regulation I. of 1793 lays down.

"To prevent any misconstruction of the foregoing articles (the articles, namely, under which the amount of revenue was permanently fixed), the Governor-General in Council thinks it necessary to make the following declarations to the zemindars, independent taluqdars and other actual proprietors of land:—"First, it being the duty of the ruling power to protect all classes of people, and more particularly those who from their situation are most helpless, the Governor-General in Council will, whenever he may deem it proper, enact such Regulations as he may think necessary for the protection and welfare of the dependent taluqdars, ryots and cultivators of the soil; that no zemindar, independent taluqdar, or other actual proprietor of land shall be entitled on this account to make any objection to the discharge of the fixed assessment which they have respectively agreed to pay."

The right of the Government to interfere for the benefit of the ryots, its eager concern for their welfare, was repeated nearly a quarter of a century later by the Government of Bengal in a despatch dated the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 1822, in which it observed :—“We freely admit indeed that even though the ryots of Bengal have possessed no right of holding their lands at determinate rates, considered in their relation to the sovereign, it was unquestionably competent to the Government in fixing its own demands, to fix also the rates at which the Mālguzar was to make his collections ; and it was, we think, clearly intended to render perpetual the rates existing at the time of the Perpetual Settlement. The intentions being declared, the rule is of course obligatory on the zemindars.”

Such was the solicitude displayed by the Government for the welfare of the ryots. What then was the exact nature of the rights which the Government parted with, under the terms of the Permanent Settlement ? What were the concessions made to the zemindars ? The Government demand was fixed in perpetuity. But the status of the ryot remained the same as before. He was paying the Pergana rate before the Permanent Settlement, and he continued to pay it after the Permanent Settlement. Under the Potta Regulations, he was to receive from the zemindar a Potta in which the amount claimed was to be consolidated into one sum. It is true that by Reg. VII of 1799, the dreaded Haftum of the ryots, the Zemindars were armed with powers unknown to the milder jurisprudence of this country. He could distrain, he could summon, he could arrest. But the object evidently of this coercive Regulation was to facilitate the collection of rents, so that there might be no excuse on the part of the zemindars for the non-payment of the Government demand. As a matter of fact, a great many estates were sold by auction, owing

to the high percentage at which the Government demand was fixed. To help the zemindars, the Haftum was enacted.

The Permanent Settlement, as I have remarked, has been a veritable bone of contention. There are those, and I regret to say friends of the ryots, who urge that the Permanent Settlement should be cancelled. This is a view with which I cannot for one moment sympathize. I look upon the Permanent Settlement as my Magna Charta. Upon that Settlement, I take my stand, and with it, I propose to fight the battles of the ryot. The only difference between zemindars and ryots in this respect is, as to how the text is to be interpreted? The difference is not unlike that which exists between Roman Catholics and Protestants, as regards the interpretation of the Bible. I have no hesitation in saying that I look upon the Permanent Settlement as a great, if not an unmixed blessing, and I will explain my reasons at once? At the present moment, a sum of about 13 crores of Rupees, making the calculations upon the Road Cess collections, flow into the pockets of the zemindars as the outcome of the Permanent Settlement. Now suppose, there was no Permanent Settlement, where would this money have gone to? How would it have been spent? It would have been spent, I regret to have to say so, but in a public meeting I am bound to give fearless expression to my honest convictions, upon the Civil and Military Departments of the Empire. I do not mean to say that Lord Ripon would have done this—for we have never had a more honest Government than the one under which it is our privilege to live—but previous Governments would have done it, and Lord Ripon would have found it very difficult to undo it. The money would have flowed out of the country, and instead of being spent in the environs of Calcutta, Otterpara and Rajshahye, would have been spent in the environs of Bayswater and Chelsea. But this is not my

only reason for supporting the Permanent Settlement. Whether wise or unwise, I think it is too late to think of withdrawing from it now. I have no hesitation in saying that every one in India is interested in maintaining the supremacy of the moral laws and in converting an Empire ostensibly based upon conquest, into one, having its foundations broad and deep, upon the unchangeable laws of morality and justice, and upon the observance of plighted faith. Sir James Stephen may talk glibly, if he likes, of the dangers of changing the foundations of British rule in India, but we who are here practically confronted with the perils and difficulties of foreign rule know that in order to be permanent, such rule should be broad-based upon the affections and gratitude of the people. We hear in these days a great deal about Russian ambition, about Russian aggression, about the steady advance of the Russian Bear over the steppes of Asia. But let me give this assurance to our Anglo-Indian rulers that if the Empire of the Queen in the East is to rest upon the contentment and affections of her people, they may bid defiance to the multitudinous hordes of the Russian Czar. Yes, we will not look behind the Permanent Settlement; we will not permit the Government to look behind the Permanent Settlement. We will fix the Government to its plighted faith, and whosoever, be he ryot or zemindar, who will not assist us in this work, is a traitor to the best interests of his country.

Such is the Permanent Settlement. Having secured its own revenue, the Government however slept over the rights of the ryots. The long period between 1793 and 1859 may be regarded as the dark age of the ryots, when the Huftum and the Punjum were in force. I have explained the contents of the Huftum, Reg VII of 1799. The Punjum was Regulation V of 1812. According to the interpretation of a high authority, the Punjum enabled the zemindars

to obtain from ryots leases upon terms which might be agreed upon between the parties. If that were so, the Regulation was in conflict with the spirit of the Permanent Settlement and was therefore *ultra vires*. Moreover Section 22 of Regulation XI of 1822 laid down that nothing in Section 9 Regulation V of 1812, was intended "in any respect to annul or diminish the right of the ryots to hold his land, subject to the payment of fixed rents or rents determinable by fixed rules, according to the law and usage of the country." The Regulation of 1812 referred to the rents paid by middlemen, at least this was the opinion of Mr. Justice Morgan. Did the Sale Law then (Act XII of 1841) empower purchasers of estates at sale for arrears of revenue to enhance at discretion the rents of ryots ? It would seem that only the rents of middlemen could be enhanced ; and further, the power had to be exercised within a reasonable time.

But the night of gloom under which the rights of the ryots had remained so long enveloped was fast approaching to a close. The year 1859 was at hand. The authorities were slowly rising to an appreciation of a long unfulfilled duty. The zemindars were clamouring ; the ryots were clamouring. A reconsideration of the Rent Law had become necessary and the Act of 1859 was passed. It was, on the whole, a beneficent measure. It was not an exclusive but an additional measure. It was not exhaustive, but only partially descriptive of the rights of the ryots. It repealed the coercive provisions of the old Regulations ; it recognised the occupancy right ; but it also recognised the right of the zemindar to enhance rent. The law, however, failed to give satisfaction to the friends of the ryots. They complained that the law sanctioned enhancement of rent on the ground of a rise in the price of produce, contrary to the clearest provisions of the Permanent Settlement. Under the

Regulations of the Permanent Settlement, the zemindar could only demand from the ryot the Pergana rate and no more than the Pergana rate. But now for the first time, the Government recognised a departure from the acknowledged principles of the Permanent Settlement. That was the contention of the ryots, and it was impossible to gainsay it. But the right to enhance has now been allowed to the zemindars for more than a quarter of a century and it would be impossible to refuse to them that right. In this matter we are bound to take not merely the partisan's but the statesman's point of view. Moreover, it would now be impossible to go back to the old Pergana rate. What that rate is, must, as regards most places, be a matter of pure conjecture. If the right to enhance is recognised, the next question is—how is that right to be enforced, how is the principle to be applied? The theory of proportion as laid down in the great Rent Case was to regulate the application of the principles recognised by Act X. The principle stated in the language of the mathematician is as follows :—"The former rent is to the enhanced rent as the former value of the produce is to its enhanced value." But the theory involved so many considerations that it was found to be practically unworkable. The zemindars complained that the right to enhance was recognised in theory, but it was inoperative in practice. The ryot complained that though the occupancy right was recognised by law, the zemindars defeated the beneficent provisions of that law by obliging the ryots to contract themselves out of it. The relations between land-lords and tenants became every day more and more strained. The Purna riots broke out in 1873. The attention of the Government was seriously called to the necessity of legislating, with a view to place on a satisfactory footing the relations between land-lords and tenants. The matter again and again came up before

the Government in different forms, and at last in 1878, a Rent Commission was appointed to consolidate the law. They submitted a Report, and they submitted a Bill, and it is upon the basis of their Report and their suggestions that the present Bill has been formed, and I now venture to solicit your attention to its scope and object.

The present Bill seeks to encompass two different objects. It seeks to help the ryots, but it also seeks to help the zemindars. To afford reasonable security to the ryot in the enjoyment of his tenure and reasonable facilities to the zemindar for the settlement and recovery of his rent are the two-fold objects of the Bill. The enjoyment of the occupancy tenure is to be the rule, and all resident cultivators are to become occupancy ryots, enjoying the full status of their position. The occupancy right is to be heritable, but it is also to be transferrable. What Bengal wants, in the language of its late Lieutenant-Governor, is a substantial tenantry, free from debt and able to bear the scarcity of hard times. It is towards the consummation of this end, so devoutly to be wished for, that the energies of the Government are bent.

That such a proposal should excite opposition is what might have been expected. The zemindars regard it as an invasion of vested rights, as an encroachment upon privileges secured to them by the Permanent Settlement. It is very curious that Sir John Shore in 1792 when remarking upon the Permanent Settlement anticipated that this would exactly be the objection which would be urged, whenever an attempt should, in future, be made by the Government on behalf of the ryots. Mark the language of Lord Cornwallis in reply:—"Neither is the privilege which the ryots in many parts of Bengal enjoy, of holding possession of the spots of land which they cultivate so long as they pay the revenue assessed upon them, by any means incom-

patible with the proprietary rights of the zemindars. Whoever cultivates the land, the zemindars can receive no more than the established rent which, in most places, is fully equal to what the cultivators can afford to pay. To permit him to dispossess one cultivator for the sole purpose of giving the land to another, would be vesting him with a power to commit a wanton act of oppression, from which he could derive no benefit. The practice that prevailed under the Mogul Government of uniting many districts into one zemindary, and thereby subjecting a large body of people to the control of one principal zemindar, rendered some restriction of the nature absolutely necessary. The zemindar, however, may sell the land, and the cultivators must pay the rent to the purchaser."

Now, gentlemen, it seems to me a matter of the highest expediency that the occupancy-right should be extended to the ryots in general. Let me ask—what would you ascribe, in part at least, the prosperity of Switzerland? Undoubtedly to its system of peasant-proprietors. Again how was it that France was able, at one bound, to emancipate herself, after her late disasters, from bankruptcy and ruin and attain a position of comparative affluence? Because France was able, in the hour of her distress, to rely upon the resources of her sturdy peasant-proprietors. Indeed, in our own country, the same phenomenon has been repeated. Wherever the ryots enjoy security of tenure, there they are well-off, and there they exhibit those manlier qualities of independence and honesty, which follow in the train of material prosperity. Amongst the Bhojpurians of Behar, the security of their tenure has been attended with precisely this result. Let me read to you an extract from a speech recently made in the Supreme Council:—“Their industry is marked and has resulted in the clearing of the jungle with which much of the land

was covered 50 years ago, planted with fruit trees, as well-irrigated from wells, and as well-fenced as any I have seen in India. No one can encamp for a day in the tract without being struck with its exceptional prosperity, which contrasts strongly with the backward state of other parts of the district in which rents are high and occupancy-rights unknown. The credit of the cultivators is so good that, as you informed me, they generally borrow at the rate of 12 per cent., that is, on as good terms as their landlord. There would, therefore, be no anxiety whatever as to their surviving without assistance at a period of ordinary famine. As to their character, the objection I generally hear to it is that, it is too manly and independent. The Bhojpore wrestlers have a name through the country, and every man carries the large Bhojpore *Latti*, which he can use with great skill. They are equally ready to defend themselves in law-courts, with which the complication of rights inseparable from any system where the majority possess interest in land has rendered them familiar. I have always found them open, communicative, ready to deal or to serve, and their honesty is proved by the low rate of interest demanded from them; but they have another side of the character for any one who attempts to oppress them."

For my part, I confess I do not see why the zemindars should really create so much fuss about the extension of the occupancy-right? It is admitted even by their accredited representatives that nearly 90 per cent. of the ryots already enjoy the occupancy-right. If so, why so strenuously object to the extension of the right, when it can affect only a very small class of zemindars? Then again if the right of transferability is customary in most districts, it is wisdom and statesmanship, it is but the proper function of the Legislature, to invest the right with the authority of law. But gentlemen, it is the object of the Legislature to extend

the occupancy right gradually to the entire peasantry of the Province, and with this view, the Bill provides heavy compensation—ten times the enhancement claimed—to be paid to the non-resident (Paikast) ryot as the price for disturbance of possession.

Such then are the provisions with regard to the occupancy right. They would however exist in name only, if unlimited power of enhancement were conceded to the zemindar. It has accordingly been resolved to impose restrictions upon the power of the zemindar to enhance rent. The Bill therefore proposes that the enhanced rate of rent for the occupancy ryot should not be double the previous rate, and that it must not exceed one-fifth of the gross produce. The rate once fixed is to continue unaltered for a period of ten years.

These are the main outlines of the Bill as regards the occupancy-right. I am bound to say that the provisions of the Bill as regards enhancement of rent are not by any means so satisfactory. There are to be two concurrent methods, one by contract and the other by the decree of the Civil Court. It is obvious that it will be the last method which will be the one most extensively in operation, for it is impossible to calculate upon a happy state of things, where the differences between zemindars and ryots will be settled by mutual agreement. The Civil Courts will therefore continue to be the tribunals to which zemindars will resort for purpose of enhancement. But how are the Civil Courts to award decrees for enhancement of rent? The executive authorities are to classify lands and to prepare a table of rates. I am bound to say that I look with great distrust upon this portion of the Bill. Lands vary in the same district, in the same sub-division and even in the same village. If that is so, the task will involve Herculean labour, and the chances of accuracy must be greatly curtailed. And indeed an inaccurate table of rates would be worse than

useless. It would mislead the Court and would involve an injustice to ryots and zemindars alike. I must say this portion of the Bill is capable of much improvement, and I have not the slightest doubt that it will receive the earnest attention of the Select Committee.

In conclusion, it remains for me to draw your attention to two classes of ryots, whose condition deserves especial attention. I mean the ryots in the Khas Mehals of the Government and the ryots in the indigo-planting districts. Are you aware that there is one law for the Government zemindar and another law for the ordinary zemindar? Why should there be this invidious distinction? Has the Government established its titles to this exceptional treatment?—has it shewn itself a more considerate landlord than the ordinary zemindar? Nothing of the kind. Why, the same cry of rack-renting is heard in all the Government Khas mehals, whether at Pooree, at Midnapore or at Diamond Harbour. The other day, I received a statement from some ryots of Jelamutti and Mujnamuti, in the district of Midnapore, which contained the startling allegation that rents had been doubled and trebled by the Government within the last few years, that grievous was the burden laid upon them and that their sufferings were beyond endurance. I do not mean to say that Mr. Rivers Thompson is responsible for all this. There are the underlings of the Sub-Deputy Collector, and these are the men who bring all this ruin and misery upon the poor ryots in the *Khas Mehals*. It is my fervent hope that the status of these ryots will attract the attention of the Government, and that this exceptional law, for which there is no justification, will be done away with altogether.

It now remains for me, gentlemen, to draw your attention for a moment to the status of the ryots in the indigo districts. I have no desire to re-open old sores, or to call to mind the bitter controversies of the past. But in this public

meeting, in this temple of truth, I must give fearless expression to my settled convictions. You are probably familiar with the saying that the *Dadun* (advances) by an indigo-planter to a ryot is never liquidated. The poor ryot may be dead and gone, indeed generations may pass away, yet the debt is never wiped off. Such is the complaint which you hear made by ryots in the indigo districts. The other day a ryot came to me from Me' spore and he told me his piteous tale, and I repeat his tale, and I shall continue to repeat that tale, till it reaches the high places of Government and justice is done to the suffering ryots in the indigo districts. He asked me if there was no redress, no remedy for him and ryots in his situation? "Here is the Rent Law," he said, "about to be recast. The ryots are to have their just rights. But are we to continue to suffer from generation to generation, and bequeath to our descendants an ever-increasing load of misery and suffering?" Such was his complaint, his piteous tale. The heart melts to hear it. But is there no remedy—I ask you and the Government, and I hope the sound of my voice will be heard beyond these walls? Is there no redress? Yes there is. Let the facts be stated, "nothing extenuate nor aught set down in malice," and by the irresistible logic of facts shall we yet conquer. Truth must triumph. The forces of righteousness and of liberty must conquer. They have prevailed everywhere in the world, and why should they not prevail here in India? Let the truth be said about the ryot in the indigo-planting districts, and the God of Truth will send us victory.

Gentlemen, we have an obvious duty to perform, a duty, the magnitude of which I can hardly over-estimate. A Bill has been introduced affecting the happiness of sixty millions of your countrymen. They know nothing at all about this Bill. They are sunk in ignorance; they are sunk in poverty.

They are voiceless and powerless. Famines may decimate them; storm-waves may sweep them away, the most grinding taxes may oppress them. Yet they know not what it is to complain. They murmur forth not even the faintest cry of a grievance. Their voice never reaches the high places of Government. The all-seeing God, the Searcher of all hearts, alone knoweth what they suffer. It is for you to give voice to the voiceless, strength to the weak and the suffering. It is for you to explain to them the purport of this law, to awaken their gratitude, to stimulate their interest and to elicit from them their views in reference to a question, in which they more than any other section of the community are deeply interested. Such an opportunity for public service hardly occurs in the life-time of a generation. Such an opportunity has occurred in your life-time, and I ask you to embrace it and to show yourselves worthy of that liberal education which you have received. It is all very well to talk glibly of sympathy for the ryots and to affect to be moved by their sorrow and distress. But how many of you, I ask, are prepared to go from village to village and to communicate to the ryots the glad tidings of their political redemption? I call upon you to take up this work. I plead for the poor and the voiceless, and may God give me strength evermore to plead for them! They will not be able to requite your labours. What have they on earth to repay you with? But you have as your reward and your solace that which is the highest on this side of the grave, the approbation of your conscience, the mute gratitude of the poor, and above all the blessings of the Great Father of the meek and the helpless. It is to the acceptance of this glorious inheritance that I invite you, and I am sure my appeal will awaken an enthusiastic response.

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## THE STATESMAN DEFENCE FUND.

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*At a public meeting held at the Albert Hall, Calcutta, on Saturday, the 18th February 1881, for the purpose of raising subscriptions for the defence of Mr. Robert Knight, Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea in moving the first resolution spoke as follows:—*

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,

I may say that the appeal is made to me somewhat unexpectedly. I came here to this meeting, certainly not under the impression that I should be called upon to move any of the resolutions that were to be placed before you for your acceptance; but as your Chairman has asked me to move this resolution, I gladly obey his call. The resolution which is placed in my hands is as follows:—

“That in the opinion of this meeting, Mr. Robert Knight, now Editor of the London *Statesman*, has done eminent services to this country, both during his stay in this country and also after his return to England, by successfully directing the attention of Parliament, of H. M’s Goverment, and of the British public generally, to the best interests of India; and that therefore he is entitled to the sympathy of the whole Indian population in his present position before a Criminal Court in England.”

Well, gentlemen, I must say that I deem it a privilege to be allowed to take a part in the proceedings of this meeting. I look upon this movement, in the light of a demonstra-

tion, which brings into special prominence one of the most interesting features of our national character. It has been said, and indeed asserted with confidence, that we are an ungrateful people, and it has been said that the word gratitude does not occur even in that flexible and highly copious language which our fathers spoke in the primitive times of the Aryan race. Gentlemen, I would invite these calumniators of our race to witness the spectacle of to-day, this imposing gathering of several hundreds of my countrymen, assembled not indeed with a view to satisfy any selfish end of their own, but to mark in a solid and substantial manner their appreciation of the distinguished services which a foreign journalist has rendered to their country. It is because I regard this meeting as the outcome of a deep sentiment of gratitude which inspires us at this moment, in relation to Mr. Knight, that I welcome this demonstration, and I rejoice that I too have my humble share in it. But, gentlemen, before I proceed to comment on the resolution which is before us, I wish to guard the promoters of this meeting—a duty which in part has been performed by the Chairman—against any misconception which the situation might suggest. I wish it to be distinctly understood—and I repeat the observations of the Chairman—that in meeting here on this occasion we do not in any way offer any opinion upon the merits of the case, which is now pending in the Court of Queen's Bench. Gentlemen, I look upon the matter somewhat in this light, and I believe I speak the sense of my countrymen in this respect. Here is Mr. Knight, a journalist who has spent the greater portion of his life time in advocating the interests and supporting the claims of my countrymen. This gentleman has been fighting our battles for a period of more than a quarter of a century, and he fought our battles at a time when there were none others

to fight them, when not a single voice was heard in defence of the cherished interests of our country. Well, Mr. Knight has now been placed in a difficult position, in the honest performance of his work as a journalist in India, and he stands before the bar of a Criminal Court. Is it not our duty to respond to the appeal which he has addressed to us ? I believe it is my duty, and I hasten to respond to the appeal which he has addressed to the people and the Princes of India. That is our attitude—the attitude of this meeting. But it may be asked—Why is Mr. Knight entitled to the grateful recognition of our countrymen ? The resolution says that Mr. Knight has done eminent services to this country. Is this a fact or a myth ? Gentlemen, I do not profess to carry you through the details of that life of conspicuous services rendered to this country. But there are one or two facts to which I am anxious to draw the attention of this meeting. Mr. Knight came to this country shortly before the Indian mutiny. You know what took place during the mutiny. You know that at that time most of our rulers lost their heads ; they breathed fire and fury, and one universal cry for vengeance rang from one part of the country to the other. At that awful moment Mr. Knight stepped forward to fight our battles. He counselled prudence and wisdom. That was a signal service rendered to us on that occasion, and in recognition of those services the people of Bombay presented him with a purse of a lakh of rupees,—£10,000. But why go back to the days of the mutiny ? Mr. Knight has done great services within our own recollection. Have you forgotten his sweeping denunciation of the iniquitous home charges ? Sixteen millions sterling every year are drained away from this country, and what has Mr. Knight been doing, not once or twice, but persistently. He has been denouncing the iniquity of these home charges ; he has appealed to the

conscience of England to bear at least a portion of these charges, which have unfairly been thrown on the Indian Exchequer. True, he has not been successful, but we all know that the cause of truth, righteousness, and liberty does not triumph in a day. All reformers must encounter many hard struggles before they can hope to see the success of their undertakings. This much at least is certain, that Mr. Knight has been able to create a powerful public opinion in England against the iniquity of the home charges. But it is not only in connection with this matter that Mr. Knight has sought to promote the interests of this country. You are aware how the import duties were remitted by the late Conservative Government with a view to please Manchester. Mr. Knight protested in eloquent language against the abolition of these duties, and made himself heard not only here but in England. When again an attempt was made to fix the cost of the Afghan war on the Indian Exchequer, Mr. Knight opposed the unjust proposal. Mr. Knight, moreover, has been the undaunted critic of the administration of this country, the terror of wrong-doers, the terror of our Magraths and our D'Oyleys, and our Kembales. Gentlemen, financial justice to India, the eligibility of natives to high offices, and the impartial administration of criminal justice,—these have been the watchwords of Mr. Knight, and to accomplish these ends he has spent the best part of his life. But this is not all. In the year 1877, almost simultaneously with the Delhi Assemblage, a fearful famine overwhelmed the North-Western Provinces, and what did the Government of the North-Western Provinces do? Why, they tried to conceal the famine, as if it could be concealed under one's cloak; they tried to conceal it, to make the Indian public believe there was no such thing as a famine, while thousands of our countrymen were dying in the North-Western Provinces. Sir George Couper endeavoured to prove

there was no such thing as a famine. Mr. Knight was in Agra at the time ; he had the facts and figures at his disposal, and these facts and figures he threw in the face of Sir George Couper—and even a Lieutenant-Governor had to succumb to their irresistible logic. But gentlemen, the last and most important of the services which Mr. Knight has rendered to India is the establishment of the *London Statesman*. I think it will be obvious that if we wish to see any improvement or amelioration in the Government of this country, it can only take place by the free and unrestrained play of English opinion on the administration of India. I speak out my sentiments frankly. It is not from the Government of India that we expect justice in this country. I make an exception on behalf of the present respected head of the Indian Government; but it is not, generally speaking, from the Indian Government that we expect justice to be done to us. That Government, three years back, imposed on us the Vernacular Press Act, the Arms Act, the License Act, and a host of other harsh and unjust measures. We must appeal to the British public, and this duty is being done by Mr. Knight on his own responsibility, and for our benefit. It is on these grounds that Mr. Knight is entitled to the grateful recognition of our countrymen. And who is Mr. Knight ? An Englishman, a foreigner, not one of your own kith and kin, not one of your race but a stranger to your sufferings and your grievances ; yet this foreigner, this Englishman, has done you services, the like of which has not been done for you by the most exalted of your countrymen. I believe that if the lot of Mr. Knight had been cast among a more grateful people than we are, there would have been statues of him in every public street and square ; and instead of our having to hold a meeting for the purpose, funds would have flowed in like water at the demand of Mr. Knight ; and it is sordid self-interest which should prompt us to respond to the

appeal that he has made. If you do not assist Mr. Knight, if you allow him to get in to a scrape, if you do not allow him to defend himself properly, you will not after that get a man to defend you with the disinterestedness of that distinguished Journalist. I would dispense with the sentiment of gratitude altogether, and look at the appeal from the point of view of self-interest, and I ask you to respond to the appeal which Mr. Knight has made. Bombay paid to Mr. Knight the sum of one lakh of rupees. Is Bengal less rich than Bombay? Bengal is much richer. Is it too much then to expect that out of this rich province Mr. Knight may expect something like Rs. 50,000? Year after year you spend thousands on your nautches and other frivolous amusements. Is it too much to ask you to unloose your purse strings on behalf of one who has served you so loyally and so faithfully? It is not Mr. Knight who is on his trial, but it is your interest that is at stake. If the *London Statesman* is to be extinguished, you will have no organ in the Press to make known your grievances to the British public. Mr. Knight appeals to you, and I on his behalf emphasize that appeal and let him who has the heart dare to refuse to respond to it. Gentlemen, if you have any feelings for your country, if you love your countrymen, if you are anxious to promote the best interests of your country, I feel confident you will generously respond to the appeal which Mr. Knight makes.

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## FREE MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS.

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*At the Annual Meeting of the Suburban Rate-payers' Association held, in the hall of the London Missionary Society's Institution Bhowanipore, Calcutta, on Saturday, the 23rd July, 1881. Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea on being requested spoke as follows:—*

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,

I hardly know what right I have to be here. I am not a rate-payer, nor even a resident of the suburbs, nor have I the privilege of holding property within your municipal limits; but the kindly letter of invitation which your Vice-President addressed to me couples my name with a movement which, gentlemen, is as dear to me as it is to you, as indeed it is to all of us. I thank you sincerely for giving me this opportunity of expressing my warm sympathy with the objects of your Association and the noble cause which it represents. I was not surprised to hear that you had enemies. Causes the noblest and the most beneficent, that scattered their blessings over a whole continent, had their enemies—their opponents, aye their calumniators. The world is prolific in its brood of Judas Iscariots—men who themselves would do nothing, not even move their little fingers for the benefit of their fellow-men, but who to serve their own interests would betray the cause of liberty and justice. I do not regret

that it is so. A little harsh and adverse criticism puts to the test the goodness of a cause, and brings out its latent and hidden energies. Did ever Christianity present a nobler aspect—did it ever attain a higher level of moral grandeur—than in those dark days of persecution and suffering, when the conscript Fathers of the Church laid down their lives for the sake of conscience and on the altar of truth ? Even the persecution which has set in now against the cause which this Association represents will shew what stuff we are made of, and will pave the way for the complete and thorough triumph of the principles, which we represent. You have asked me to state whether the people in the mofussil appreciate the boon of municipal self-government. I must confess that the question seems to me to be somewhat absurd ; but this absurd question, I must confess, has been forced upon you by your enemies. Let me ask you, was there ever a people which did not wish to have the control of its own affairs—the management of its own destinies ? Self-government is the ordering of nature, the law of the universe, and the will of God ; and neither Lieutenant-Governors like Sir Ashley Eden, nor specially-gifted Secretaries like Mr. Mackenzie, nor authors and philosophers like Mr. Sterndale, will convince me, or any man in India in possession of his common sense, that the people of Bengal are an exception to this universal law. Have we not indeed been accustomed, from the earliest times, to manage our own municipal affairs ? What were those ancient village communities ? They had much more power than our municipalities. Not only did they look to the conservancy and sanitation of the villages, but they controlled the police and they administered justice. Your Chairman has remarked that in the mofussil your people are apathetic with regard to the boon of municipal self-government. I am prepared to say that it is not so. Wherever I went to agitate the question of

municipal self-government, I was received with open arms. It was a consideration not shown to me personally, but to the noble cause which I represented. They gathered round my banner in their hundreds and thousands with fervour and enthusiasm, and they blessed the Indian Association which had initiated this movement. But suppose it were otherwise,—suppose, instead of this active interest, our countrymen showed apathy and indifference,—would it not still be our duty to infuse new light and to impart new enthusiasm in regard to this great cause, and make them feel the same interest in relation to it which distinguishes your noble Association ? I entirely agree with the remark of the Chairman that the time has come for us to agitate for municipal self-government. "Now or Never" should be our motto. Lord Ripon has expressed himself in favour of this movement in reply to the address of the Municipality of Dehra Doon. His Lordship was pleased to say that he had it in charge from her Gracious Majesty the Queen-Empress herself to look to the Municipal Administration of the Empire, for there the political education of the people begins. When his Excellency was here, he welcomed the Calcutta Municipality on the ground especially that its constitution in part was of a representative character. I feel convinced that if the great public bodies of the land were united together on this great question, complete success must crown our efforts. It is absurd to say that we are not fit for local self-government. Were the English fit for it in the 13th century, when Simon de Montford summoned the House of Commons ? Or were the Romans fit for it in the days of the Republic, when they governed the whole of the Italian Peninsula ? If we are unfit to manage our local concerns after a century of British rule, let me ask to whom would the discredit belong ? We may dismiss this consideration altogether as idle and frivolous. Let all the

associations of the country unite together and let them agitate ; they may not get the boon all at once—they may not get it for years together—the lifetime of a generation may pass away,—but if we really are in earnest—if we infuse into this agitation, the life and energy of the West,—then I venture to predict that all that obscurity and haze which hangs over the satisfactory settlement of this question, will disappear before the morning sun of liberty and light, and the glorious agitation in which the country is so deeply interested will be brought to a successful and triumphant conclusion for the benefit of the governed as well as of the governors.

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## KESHUB CHUNDER SEN.

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*At a Public Meeting held in the Town Hall, Calcutta, on Wednesday the 30th January, 1884, at 4 p.m., Dr. W. W. Hunter, L.L.D., C.I.E., in the Chair, the Hon'ble Mr. Gibbs moved the first resolution which ran as follows:—*

THAT this meeting, representing all classes of the community, records its sense of the loss sustained by the people of India by the death of Keshub Chunder Sen.

In rising to support the first resolution Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea spoke as follows:—

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,

I beg to support the Resolution which has been proposed by the Hon'ble Mr. Gibbs, and seconded by Newab Abdul Lattif Khan Bahadur. It is with a degree of melancholy interest that I take part in the mournful ceremony of to-day. A prince and a great man has fallen in our midst—one whose purity of life, loftiness of aims and principles, and single-minded devotion to the highest interests of his country, has entitled him, through generations yet unborn, to the admiring gratitude of posterity. It is around the ashes of such a man that we are assembled, to join our tears with those of his widowed wife and disconsolate family, and to mark, in some tangible form, the expression of our deep grief and of the

sense of irreparable loss which the community has sustained by his untimely death. This is not the first time that these walls have re-echoed to the dismal sounds of a great national sorrow. Ten years ago, within this hall, and about this time of the year, before an assembly, as august and as representative, the nation were gathered together to mourn the death of a great Judge who had just been cut off in the prime of manhood, in the full maturity of his intellectual powers, with a great career and a great prospect before him. We know not how it is, but in the inscrutable ways of Providence, our best men are taken away from our midst, precisely when we most seem to need their guidance and their directing wisdom. Who does not now mourn the death of Dwarka Nath Mitter? Who does not wish that in these exciting times, we had the benefit of the commanding eloquence of Ram Gopal Ghose, and the serene wisdom of Hurrish Chunder Mukerji? In Europe, great moral teachers and eminent public men lay down the burden of life, full of years. But in this unhappy country, before the victory has been achieved, before life's battle has been won, the hero succumbs. In the presence of these awful decrees of the Supreme, it is not permitted to us to be inquisitive. We bow to them trustingly and in the abundant faith that the Lord has, in his own good time, called his chosen servants to their rest. So, too, Keshub has gone to his rest, and we mourn his irreparable loss. The Resolution says that all India grieves over the untimely death of Keshub Chunder Sen. Is this true, or is it the usual language of convention that we are accustomed to find in eulogistic Resolutions? I have no hesitation in saying that it represents the pure and simple truth. From the wilds of Assam to the hills of Quetta, from Mussurie on the north to Madras on the south, there is one common, universal sentiment of grief that pervades the national mind. Hindoos

and Mussulmans, Parsees and Christians, all sects, all creeds, and all races have, for the time being, forgotten their mutual differences, and have united to pay the tribute of veneration to the memory of the illustrious dead. How are we to explain this circumstance ? For Keshub, after all, was the leader of a community, which, in point of numbers, is simply lost in the boundless ocean of Indian sects. Moreover, he was only the leader of a portion of the Brahmo community. What then is there to explain this universal outburst of national grief, these tears shed around his ashes ? The explanation is not far to seek. It is obvious to the inquisitive gaze of the earnest seeker after truth. Keshub Chunder Sen was in the field of religion, the embodiment of those new-born forces which English education has called forth into existence. He was their living impersonation, their most powerful exponent. English education ever since its introduction into the country, has acted as a dissolvent upon the framework of Native Indian Society. It has melted away in the fierce crucible of an over-mastering logic the attenuated lineaments of an ancient, though decrepit faith. From the very first Hinduism received a shock, such as it had never felt before. The whole of that noble fabric, which, for centuries, had withstood the fiercest attacks of Kings and Emperors, seemed to topple from its basement. A strange impulse was felt, as if communicated from the clouds on high. There was an awakening of the national conscience. The scales seemed to drop from the eyes of the nation. They looked out. They saw the truth, feebly and dimly, it may be. But there it was, in all its beauty, in all its simplicity and in all its radiance. They struggled for utterance. Keshub appeared on the scene. With his heaven-born eloquence, with his lips touched by the celestial fire, he pronounced the word, and gave passionate expression to their indistinct thoughts.

But Keshub Chunder Sen will appear in history not merely as the interpreter of a phase of national thought with which he was brought face to face. Ah no! His name will be associated with an age of religious and moral revival in his country's annals. It has been truly said that a great man is the product of his age, and that he is made by his age. But, in a larger and far truer sense, he makes the age and impresses upon it his genius and his character. So it was with Keshub Chunder Sen. He imparted an unusual impetus to the moral and social aspirations of his countrymen. The consciences of men had become dormant. Religious life was well-nigh extinct. The perception of right and wrong had become obtuse. Deep impenetrable gloom hovered over the moral atmosphere. Despair and dejection was pointed on every face. Men gazed at each other in blank despair. Keshub appeared, and with the magician's wand chased away the gloom, and from the depths of darkness and despair, there peeped forth the morning light of hope and righteousness. A great step was taken towards the moral regeneration of our countrymen. We hear in these days a great deal about political regeneration. But bear in mind that political regeneration is impossible of attainment without moral well-being, and that national greatness depends upon the awakening of the national conscience. If our people should ever become great, if Aryavarta should ever again become the abode of the good and the true, the result would, in no small degree, be due to the efforts of the Brahmo leader whose loss we now mourn.

There has been in recent years a considerable display of public spirit and of political feeling. I have no hesitation in saying that Keshub is in part the remote author of this change. For history teaches us the great truth that, when the spirit of inquiry has once been called forth into play in the field of religion, it is sure to vent itself in other spheres

of activity and to display its energies in matters relating to the government of the country. The reformation in England was but the signal for the establishment upon a broad basis of the unchangeable principles of English liberty. The religious awakening of the Sikh people, under the teachings of Guru Nanak, was the precursor of the political greatness of that noble race. I might multiply instances. But it is unnecessary to do so. The great religious teacher is verily also the father of his people. But Keshub Chunder Sen was not only a great religious teacher, he was also a great social reformer, and he was, above all, the friend of women. For the education of women, he established colleges and schools. He fully recognised the truth that man's progress means woman's progress, and that no community can advance without the advancement of women. It were much to be wished that this truth were more largely appreciated and more keenly felt. It is not enough that there should be a mere intellectual belief. That we have already. What is needed is that we should be penetrated with a deep and abiding sense that a solemn duty is laid upon us to take along with us, in our onward intellectual march, the womanhood of our race. When there is this sense, and this feeling and when they lead to definite action, there will be a great step taken towards the intellectual and moral elevation of our people.

Such was Keshub Chunder Sen. Such were the services which he rendered to the community at large. We say nothing of his services to the particular church or the particular creed over which he presided. Such considerations lie outside the scope of a meeting of this kind. We are debarred from entering into the debatable ground of controversial religion. For my part, I know not whether the time has yet come for an impartial estimate of the worth of Keshub Chunder Sen. The impartial verdict of history is

not what is to be expected from the hands of contemporaries. It is the misfortune of great men that they are in advance of the age in which they live. Contemporaries, dazzled and bewildered by the splendour of their genius, are often unable to appreciate their worth or to estimate aright the motives which inspire their conduct. But they shine out like radiant meteors shedding a flood of light upon the path of succeeding generations.

You are about to resolve to perpetuate in marble the worth of the great Brahmo leader. But whether you do so or not, he will adorn the imperishable pages of history with a lustre all his own. The most suitable monument that you could raise in honour of such a man would be to consecrate in your lives, and to assimilate into your every-day existence the noble lessons of purity, of righteousness, and singleminded devotion to the highest interests of our country, which he taught, and for which he lived and died. Keshub is dead, but though dead, he rules with an empire far more complete and far more assured than any which he claimed or asserted, when living. The trumpet-notes of his voice shall be heard to the remotest ages. They will linger in the recollections of unborn generations, and lead them on to the achievement of their moral regeneration. Let us imitate the gentleness, the sweetness, and manliness of Keshub Chunder Sen, and then we shall have honoured his memory, fulfilled the objects of to-day's meeting, and prepared the way for that moral regeneration of this vast Indian continent, upon which he had set his heart, and which, when perfected, will be the index and the guarantee of our social, and I venture to think also, of our political greatness.

## NATIONAL FUND:

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*At a public meeting held at Babu Anuñthnath Dey's Bazar, Simla, Calcutta, on Wednesday the 27th July 1883, in rising to support the first resolution Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea spoke as follows:—*

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to move the first resolution which is as follows:—

“That this meeting is of opinion that a National Fund should be raised, with a view to secure the political advancement of the country by means of constitutional agitation in India and England, and by other legitimate means, and that the other provinces be invited to join in the movement.”

Gentlemen, before I proceed to offer any observations upon this resolution, you will permit me for a moment to recur to a thought which is uppermost in my mind, and to give expression to the deep and fervent sense of gratitude which overpowers me, at the present moment, for the warm sympathy I received in the hour of my distress from all classes and all sections of a great and united nation. I confess I never knew that I occupied such a place in the affections of my countrymen. I never knew that my humble services were viewed with such indulgent consideration by those, whose approbation, next to the approbation of my

own conscience I value as the highest reward of my public life. This expression of sympathy, deep and spontaneous, proceeding from the great heart of the nation, has filled me with an overpowering sense of gratitude, and I trust in God that it shall be the high privilege of my life to be able to devote my body and soul, to consecrate my energies, my time, my resources, my humble talents, my all to the service of my country ; and the highest reward that I shall expect will be the consolation, vouchsafed to me in the supreme hour of my life, that I have not lived in vain, but that I have been of some service to the country of my birth. Gentlemen, I confess I have left prison under a solemn sense of responsibility ; I feel, I scarcely know why, that every word that I shall now utter will be scanned with the utmost scrutiny, both by friends as well as by opponents—by friends, perhaps, with the best of motives ; by opponents, I regret to say, with a view to bring discredit on that cause, which is so dear to every one of us. I feel, I may say, a great load of unredeemed duties pressing on me, and that load will continue to oppress me, until I have established, in part at least, my claim to that abounding sympathy, which I have received from all sections of this great Indian public. But perhaps I exaggerate. I arrogate to myself the homage which was paid to the principle which I feebly represented. The rights of conscience, the freedom of the press, the powers and prerogatives of the highest Court in the land—these were the burning questions which deeply stirred the national mind, and I was but the humble personage, around whom the battle of principles was fought, and hence probably I drew that sympathy, for which I am so truly grateful.

Gentlemen, I have many things to say in connection with the events that have recently taken place. I have, so to speak, a message to communicate to you, and I trust that you will bear with me for a few moments while I lay before

you some of those matters which have been pressing on my mind with painful interest for the last eight or ten days. Gentlemen, it is abundantly clear there has been a great outburst of feeling. It is impossible to doubt that circumstance. The nation has passed through a mighty convulsion, an unusual impetus has been communicated to the national mind, an impetus which, I trust, it will be possible for us to utilise for the highest purposes; and what we at present seek to do is simply to take advantage of this splendid opportunity which has presented itself to us, in order to lay the foundation of a great National Fund. Gentlemen, I may say that, in that explosion of feeling, there was no section of the community which was so violently agitated as the womanhood of our country. They held meetings, they recorded resolutions, they sent me letters of sympathy. I received as many as forty letters from them, and one gentleman who paid me a visit at the Presidency Jail, said that he did so, at the instance of his wife. I say this feeling should be consolidated, and strengthened for we know there is no impress which is so deep upon the mind of a man as that which a woman's hand lays upon it. And what is the means I would propose, the method which I would venture to suggest, for the consideration of this meeting? Well, gentlemen, I live in a village, and therefore I am to some extent able to gauge the influence which ladies working in a noble cause are sometimes able to exercise. There are Christian ladies in connection with Zenana Missions, and there is one such mission in the village where I live. I may truly say, speaking of this Mission, that it has shattered to pieces the fabric of Hindooism in the village, and has created a revolution in our domestic circles. The work of construction may not be so perfect; but the work of destruction is all but complete. Therefore, we have this fact clearly established, that European and

Eurasian ladies, although they are strangers to our language and strangers to our manners and customs, yet, when they become missionaries in a good cause, are able to effect a great revolution in our homes. Why should we not be able, taking advantage of this explosion of feeling, to organise female agencies to preach the cause of social reform and political advancement? I know there are difficulties in the way; but they do not seem to me to be insuperable. We have many advanced and educated ladies in Bengal at the present moment. Might we not utilise them for this grand, this noble and highly patriotic object, fraught with good to the country? Funds will be required; but even if one such agency is started, then, under the immutable law of growth, a hundred more will, in time, spring forth in different parts of Bengal. Our womanhood represent an unutilised source of power. They are there rotting, wasting away their energies. Why should we not utilise them for a purpose which will be so highly beneficial to the interests of the country? You are about to raise funds for constitutional agitation; but I hope they will be used for other purpose besides agitation, and this is one of those purposes.

Any body who looks around to see what is taking place now in the country cannot but be impressed with the solemnity of the situation. There are moments which constitute a crisis in the lifetime of a nation, and I verily believe such a time has now arrived in the history of our own country, and it is one of those times when the practice of moderation has become a virtue of the highest moment. I earnestly wish we should forget the past, and let by-gones be by-gones. I for my part, have no wish to carry on this war of recrimination which is likely to be attended with fatal results, so far as we are concerned. It is for the credit of the Supreme Government that I would ask you to practise

moderation. What is the charge brought against the Supreme Government, even by responsible leaders of the Opposition, by men in the position of Lord Salisbury? Why, they say Lord Ripon is directly responsible for the deplorable state of feeling between the European and Native communities. Gentlemen, is Lord Ripon responsible for this state of things? I say, no. (Loud cries of "no" and a voice, "Those rampant Armenians are"). I believe I re-echo the sentiments of all my countrymen, and I anticipate the judgment of history, when I say that there never was an Indian Viceroy more anxious to cultivate the good-will of all classes and to preserve harmony among them all than Lord Ripon. It is a calumny to say that Lord Ripon is responsible for this state of things. Who, then, are the people upon whose heads the responsibility must rest? They are truly responsible who threw the first stone, and who used the first harsh word in this unhappy controversy; but we will not recriminate, we will be moderate, and thus set a noble example. But, let those who calumniate Lord Ripon know our sentiments, and let these sentiments be re-echoed from town to town in the United Kingdom. I hope Lord Salisbury will take note of the expression of feeling which has proceeded from the press of this country, and which proceeds from public meetings held in this country. We ought, I say, to be moderate, and it is not a mere empty, barren sentiment which I would ask you to cultivate. There are strong pregnant reasons which I have to urge in support of this view. If we continued the war of recrimination—if we went on retaliating in rabid articles for every rabid article that appeared in the *Englishman* or other newspapers, why, there would be the amplest justification found for the passing of another Gagging Act. Such an Act would, in theory, be applicable to the European and Native section of the press alike, but in practice would be applicable to you, and you

alone. Therefore for the maintenance of our rights and for the preservation of the credit of the Government, it becomes our duty to practise moderation. Let us use judgment and discretion to tide over the crisis that has arisen. The resolution says that a fund is to be raised for the purpose of constitutional agitation. What, then, is constitutional agitation ? What is it that we understand by the expression ? By constitutional agitation, we mean agitation carried on within the limits of the law. We may hold public meetings to protest against the action of the Government. We may wait in deputations. We may send petitions. But we may do nothing which even remotely has the appearance of illegality about it. We take our stand upon the broad and unassailable basis of the law and constitution. There we stand, and there we intend to remain. We shall not permit ourselves to be dislodged from it, or be provoked into quitting it, and we shall discountenance all proceedings calculated even remotely to bring about a violation of the law. We venerate the law—we adore the principle of the law—we worship it—and we are anxious that the same feeling of veneration should be ingrained in the minds of our countrymen. But, gentlemen, there are those who say—"you are pestilential agitators, you do an immense amount of mischief. You are disloyal and seditious; you are silently but surely sapping the foundations of British power in India." Now, I put this question in all seriousness—Who are they who are really disloyal ? Who are the men who are seditious and unfaithful to the Government of this country ? Those who say ditto to every measure of Government, good, bad or indifferent ; or men, like ourselves, who have the courage and manliness to speak out our minds. I again ask—who are the men that are disloyal to the Government ? The supporters of Vernacular Press Acts and the opponents of Native Jurisdiction Bill, or men who can fight against

the Vernacular Press Act, and who can support the Jurisdiction Bill ? I will not go into personalities, or I could rake up names of men who are not worthy to be called loyal subjects or faithful citizens, who forget what is due to their country, who forget that it is to the advantage of the Government that the truth—the whole truth, the uncompromising truth—should always be told. We are not disloyal, opposition is not disloyalty ; we are her Majesty's Opposition in this country—the responsible Opposition of her Majesty, and we are the more responsible, because here we are in a foreign country, the Government of which is unaided by representative institutions. Such a Government is likely to commit mistakes, and what does the agitator do ? He points out to the Government the mistakes which it may commit. He warns the Government of the rocks ahead, and of the shoals and quicksands upon which the ship of State might be wrecked, at any moment. Are we disloyal, because we point out the mistakes of Government, or those sycophants who in season and out of season sing the praises of an erring administration ? I wish to avoid personalities ; but the truth must be told. At the present moment especially, our position is not one of opposition. On the contrary, it is a position of active sympathy and co-operation with the Government of India. Here the Government is straining every nerve to pass the Jurisdiction Bill. From one section of the native community, it has received the most lukewarm support. I am here in the temple of truth, and must tell the truth. From the whole of the middle-class community, it has met with the strongest support. The Ilbert Bill is a small thing in itself, but a great principle is involved in it. It is a test case to show whether the government of this country is to be carried on according to the principles of the *Englishman* and his party, or according to the declared wishes of the English Crown and the English Parliament.

It is this principle which has invested the Ilbert Bill with the importance it has assumed. I say, therefore, our position is not one of opposition. On the contrary, at the present moment, it is one of active sympathy and co-operation with the Supreme Government. I may just for one moment refer to a fact which will illustrate how important is the help which the Indian Association, has rendered to the Government at any rate, in the matter of local self-government. You are aware that the whole country thoroughly appreciates the advantages of local self-government. To whose efforts is the Government indebted for this consummation ? It is to the efforts of the Indian Association that the Government is indebted for the lively sense of gratitude which the Local Self-government Bill has evoked throughout the country. The Association sent out agents, held meetings, and created an agitation which convinced the country of the blessings of Local Self-government.

Now, how is constitutional agitation to be carried on ? I venture to lay down the following programme. We will say nothing immoderate, nothing indiscreet, but at the same time, we will not yield, until we have gained our point. We may lose to-day ; we may lose the day after ; but if our cause is based on justice and truth, it is bound to succeed in the long run. That is the code of the constitutional agitator. He never yields or submits. He is bound to triumph, because what he is fighting for is based on the unalterable principles of truth and morality. But what is to be the *modus operandi* ? We must work by means of associations. Associations must be established throughout the length and breadth of the country. There must be a network of associations throughout the province. The Indian Association has already got many branches in many parts of India ; but we want to have a branch in every district town, and every sub-divisional town. We

want to have the pleaders, the pillars of every public movement in this country to take part with us. They are not Government servants. They need not be afraid of losing Government patronage. They can stand upon their rights. In every country the bar has always fought most resolutely the battles of the country. I cannot forget that Daniel O'Connell, the great Irish Liberator, was also the leader of the Bar, and Gratton and Flood were also both distinguished barristers. Let there be a thorough organisation of the legal element in the country. They well know how to drive a coach-and-four through an Act without getting into the toils of the law. But outside the ranks of lawyers, there are others whose help also is needed. There are the shop-keepers, and there are the peasants. The shop-keepers are independent men. Why should we not have their unions? Why should we not have also ryots' unions? Not long ago an English gentleman with whom I was speaking about different matters asked me in a somewhat contemptuous tone—"Where are your cohorts? You agitate about various questions, you write to the newspapers, you create a hubbub in the country. But where are the cohorts, where are your rank and file, who are to support you in the hour of trial?" The remark made a deep impression upon my mind, and I said ;—"Let ten years pass, and I shall answer your question. I shall bring out the cohorts from the deep quagmire of ignorance and superstition, and send them forth on their high errand of patriotic duty." Yes, we must educate the ryots, lift them from their present doggraded condition to a higher level of moral and political existence. The Indian Association must take up the work of ryots' unions, must take up the work of shop-keepers' unions, must take up the work of women's organisation, and all these things must engage the serious attention of the Association. But money is needed, and therefore we

require a National Constitutional Fund to aid us in the work. And how are we to raise this money? I have a suggestion to make in this connection. How do the Wahabis raise their funds? I speak of the Wahabi reformers, and not the Wahabi rebels; so you need not be afraid. They do it in this way. Every householder puts by a handful of rice before he takes his meal, and these handfuls are all collected in the course of the week, and then they are taken to the mosque for the Wahabi missionary to come round and take them up. In this way a fund is raised for the maintenance of the Wahabi mission. Why should we not be able so to organise that by imposing the least possible amount of hardship, we might raise a large sum from the opulent people of Bengal? Why should we not be able to organise so that every village in Bengal might pay one rupee which should be collected from the *mundul* of the village? We should ask him—"Will you pay this amount to the National Fund? We know nothing about the villagers, but we know you the distinguished head of this village; will you pay us your rupee, and let us be gone?" If there are ten lakhs of villages; then instead of six lakhs, we should get ten lakhs of rupees, and we should not have caused the least hardship to any one. Well, now, what about the towns? Let us go to the mofussil towns first; and with reference to them, I would say, let us ask an anna from every householder. Mofussil people are not so rich as these gentlemen here, and they will not be able to pay a rupee per family. If you tried to get a rupee, they might come out with a big club, and pay you something which you did not bargain for. But every one *cañ* pay an anna; therefore, I say, let us have an organisation, such as I have suggested, for the mofussil. Now, we come to this great imperial town; it is a very large place to manage. There are 500,000

people in it, and each a John Stuart Mill on a small scale. Each man can act and think for himself, and if you go to any one of these gentlemen for a subscription, you must be prepared to answer all his questions. He will make a thousand suggestions, and after you have expressed your readiness to comply with them, he will perhaps pay you half a rupee ! What I suggest is that a man should be appointed for each *parah* consisting of 50 or 60 houses. There is always one man who is the *dalapattee* of the *parah*, and we might engage his services, and, I think if we were able to form an organisation of this description, we should be able to raise at least one lakh of rupees from the town. Some people will say all this looks very well on paper, but where are your agents ? Where are those who are to devote time and labour, who are to sweat and toil, and delve and die, if need be in this work ? I ask—Are there not such men in this great gathering ? Has not the present crisis brought to the front such men who are prepared to devote themselves with unflagging energy to the interest of their country ? I see here six or seven thousand men—are there not to be found in this great gathering of my countrymen at least some fifty or sixty men who will do this work, and go about from *parah* to *parah* and make the *dalapatties* pay ? If there are such men, will they not at once place themselves in communication with the Indian Association ? And I may say work will be given to them, which will be productive of the greatest good to the country, and which will also be extremely agreeable to them. I venture to suggest this organisation, but I am afraid I have taken up too much of your time. Well, gentlemen, there is one part of the resolution which especially recommends itself to me, and which will strike a chord of sympathy in the other presidencies of India. It is that the other presidencies should be invited to join in this movement. I look upon

this as a message going from Bengal to the other Indian provinces, asking them to co-operate with us in a matter of national importance. The prospects of Indian regeneration must depend upon the co-operation of the different presidencies and provinces. Not long ago a newspaper editor published what purported to be a conversation on the part of a Sikh soldier, who was reported to have used the most contemptuous language, in reference to the natives of Bengal. I am inclined to think that the editor of that paper, after witnessing the grand and impressive demonstrations held lately in the Punjab, will come to the conclusion that his informant was mistaken, or that he had drawn pretty freely on his own imagination. There is indeed a strong bond of union between the educated natives in different parts of India, and was there ever a grander spectacle than that of which I was the humble centre, not long ago? I say that instead of two months' imprisonment, I would gladly welcome two years, if the result of it would be the consummation of Indian unity. The strongest sympathy exists between the different Indian races. A blow is aimed at high education in the Punjab, and Bombay and Bengal join in the protest.

Famine makes its appearance in Madras, and Bengal stretches forth a helping hand. Under British auspices, a distracted country, peopled by many races, bids fair to become the home of a great and united people. England has achieved many triumphs in history, but this will be the noblest of them all. It will throw in to the shade the memory of her proudest achievements. A year of Waterloo's will not equal it. I think, therefore, that the Indian Association is to be congratulated on sending forth this message to the other presidencies, asking them to join in this great movement. Gentlemen, I have only two or three things more to add. What is to be the object of this fund?

What are to be the purposes to which it is to be applied ? Of course, it is needless to say that it is impossible for me to state specifically just yet all the objects of this Fund ; but I may state in general terms what we mean to do. The main object, is to bring the Government of this country into harmony with national aspirations, and the declared wishes of the Crown and the English people. We want local self-government in perfection. We are anxious to have provincial self-government. We desire Parliamentary institutions. We desire, in short, to be placed on the same footing with the Colonial possessions of the Crown. They have the complete management of their internal affairs, subject to the protectorate of England. This is the goal which we hanker after. This represents the culmination of our efforts. God knows we are not sedition-mongers ; we are loyal men ; we are anxious to place broadbased the foundations of British rule in the hearts of her Indian people. I, for my part, regard British rule as providential, as one of the dispensations of the God of history. I am anxious for its permanence ; and I have ventured to point out the conditions, upon which its permanence may be secured. The days of Government by physical force are indeed past and gone. A new *regime* has dawned. The empire of the moral forces is about to be established here, the supremacy of the moral laws is about to be recognised even in India ; and Lord Ripon stands forth as the glorious apostle, as the representative of the new force, which for the first time has made its way into Indian administration. We desire that his name should descend to future generations as the originator of a new and beneficent epoch in our history. Above all, we desire the name of our mother, the Queen-Empress of India, to be associated in our minds and in the minds of our children's children with this noble inauguration of a beneficent policy. These are our hopes

and aspirations. It may perhaps be said that I am a dreamer. But the dreams of one age become the realities of the next. Dante sang of Italian unity 300 years before Italy became united. The German Professors taught the doctrine of the unity of the Fatherland at least a hundred years before the Fatherland became united. So will it be with this ideal which is based upon truth and liberty, and is consistent with the most perfect loyalty. Therefore the ideal will one day become a bright reality, to the glorification of England, and to the benefit of India. Gentlemen, how then is this money to be raised? Is it impossible to raise it? An English paper—which shall be nameless, because I am not willing to give offence—seems to think that Lord Ripon is the author of this agitation in connection with the National Fund. This newspaper editor argues that Lord Ripon's policy has created a violent convulsion of feeling, and that the National Fund is the product of this feeling. Therefore on the principle that things which are equal to the same thing are equal to one another, Lord Ripon is the author of this agitation. But there is one unfortunate circumstance which makes this position wholly untenable. This is quite an old idea. There is not even the faintest appearance of novelty about it. This idea was put forward in 1879, before Lord Ripon came to this country. It was broached at a Town Hall Meeting held in the month of September, and I was the person who proposed the resolution, recommending it to the public. It is in effect an old idea, dressed in a new garb, and we are anxious to give it a trial this time, because our countrymen have shown during the last two months an unwonted capacity for self-sacrifice. Well, then, I ask is it possible to raise six lakhs of rupees? Let us for a moment observe what the Anglo-Indians have done. A community of a few hundred thousand men have raised in the course of a few months a

fund to the tune of one-and-a-quarter lakhs. We count our millions where they count their thousands, and we ought therefore to be able to raise at least ten times what the Anglo-Indians have raised. I meet with no favourable response: (Sudden applause.) That is more welcome. That I take to be an indication of a firm resolve on the part of this meeting to do every thing in its power for the creation of a National Fund. Our fathers raised temples to their gods and goddesses and spent thousands on their charities. Have we become degenerated under the influence of English education? (Cries of "No, no.") When we have money, what is it that we do? I shall be plain-spoken. We begin to read the *Indian Mirror* and to read the promissory-note account. We begin to think of investing the money in Government promissory-notes, or in houses, or the purchase of zemindaries? But the cause of the country, the care of the poor, works of piety,—these do not claim our attention.

This is deeply to be regretted. I hope the outburst of feeling lately displayed will show that we are at least as capable of self-sacrifice as our fathers were. You spend lakhs at the *Doorga Pooja* and other festivities. Let us have but a fraction of what you spend on these occasions. Let us appeal to the *Doorga Pooja*-makers and implore them to devote a part of their money to this National Fund. Let the *Doorga Pooja* go on till the day of doom, but let us have some help from the *Doorga Pooja*-makers and *Doorga* will be thrice blessed. Gentlemen, there has been a great ebullition of feeling. What is to be the memento of this outburst of national life? Posterity will read, not in the pages of the *Indian Mirror*, but perhaps in the pages of history, that on the 11th of May 1883 a meeting of 20,000 persons was held in this hall, and the grief was so great that they could not find language to express themselves. Then they will ask—What became of all this upheaval of national life? Did it vanish

away into thin air, or manifest itself in streams of wordy rhetoric? Will you allow that to be said? (Cries of "no, no.") Well, then, let us raise a monument to ourselves,—a monument which will guide and instruct posterity;—and what better monument can you raise than a National Fund? Gentlemen, when Bishop Latimer was being burnt at the stake, he said "Brother Ridley, this day we will kindle a fire in England which all the waters of the Thames will not be able to extinguish." Oh! let us kindle a fire on the altar of our country which all the waters of the Ganges will not be able to put out. Oh! let us feed the sacrificial flames till they reach the footsteps of the throne of the Supreme, and fill the land with beauty and splendour and glory? But where are our priests—those who, touched by the celestial fire, will feed the flames? Where are our beneficent workers—the propagators of the new faith? Let them gather round the banner of the Indian Association; let them disseminate the principles of the Association replete with national life; and then this darkness will disappear and the morning star of liberty, and peace, and righteousness will appear resplendent in the Indian firmament.

Let each one of us then contribute his mite in aid of this great fund. Let boys, young men and old men come forward with their contributions. I hope even the ladies of the zenana will contribute. I trust the sound of my voice will reach them. Let each one bring a stone to the national cairn; and a goodly edifice will spring up, full of joy, of hope, and of beauty.

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## CRIMINAL PROCEDURE CODE AMENDMENT BILL.

A public meeting of the native inhabitants of Calcutta and its Suburbs was held at the Town Hall, Calcutta, on Monday, the 14th January, 1884, to take into consideration the Criminal Procedure Code Amendment Bill. W. C. Banerjea, Esq., Barrister-at-Law was in the chair. The first resolution having been duly moved, seconded and supported, Raja Shama Sunkur Roy, Bahadur moved the second resolution which was supported by Kumar Neelkrishna Bahadur. The resolution ran as follows:—

“ That this meeting regrets that the decision arrived at by the Executive Council of the Government of India, with regard to the Criminal Procedure Code Amendment Bill, adds to the already existing invidious distinctions recognised by law in the status of accused persons based upon considerations of race; and that it is calculated to lead to administrative inconvenience and to failure of justice by reason of the limited number of the Anglo-Indian community in the mofussil, and also in some cases by reason of the fact that the District Magistrate is the only covenanted magisterial officer in the district. But, at the same time, this meeting feels it to be its duty to place on record its deep sense of gratitude to His Excellency the Viceroy for his noble vindication of the Proclamation of the Queen, and for his earnest and sincere desire to govern India for the benefit of its people.”

In rising to support the resolution Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea spoke as follows:

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to support the resolution which has been moved and seconded. But I feel, it is necessary for me to clear my ground. I am anxious to guard myself and the promoters of this meeting against the possibility of any misapprehension.

sion which the circumstances of the case might suggest. Let it not go forth from this great meeting of my countrymen that we are assembled to censure the Government of India or to condemn Lord Ripon. We have met here to take exception to a particular measure, but the man and his policy are entitled to our highest respect. I use the language of sober and deliberate truth when I say that we are living in a critical time, and that upon our conduct at the present moment, and perhaps at this meeting, will depend in a very material degree the decision of the question, as to whether the Government of India shall in future be conducted according to the principles professed by Lord Ripon, or according to those other principles, professed by Sir James Stephen and the men of his party. Political excitement is good in its way. Far be it from me to deprecate it. I trust that in the times that are coming, our countrymen will continue to take as great an interest in their political concerns as that which inspires them at the present moment. But let us not be so carried away by the wild and ungovernable impulse of political passion as to compromise the interests of our country, and to sacrifice to the excitement of the moment the plainest dictates of political wisdom. We condemn the *concordat*, none more emphatically than myself. We condemn its terms. But above all, we condemn the manner in which that settlement has been arrived at. Here was a great Government, entering into a secret pact with a body of irresponsible men, noted for their bitter attack of the Government, and who form, so to speak, the Jacobin Club of the East. That was unworthy of the Government. Such is our attitude with reference to the *concordat*. But our feelings towards Lord Ripon personally are those of deep gratitude for his noble vindication of the Proclamation of the Queen, and for his earnest and sincere desire to govern India for the benefit of its countless

millions. Who that heard him the other day, when the torrent of emotion nearly choked his utterances, could leave the Council Chamber, without the conviction deeply impressed upon his mind, that though Lord Ripon might not be able to carry out all that he has promised, that though the measure of his performance might fall short of the measure of his promises and the measure of his intentions, yet in the arduous task of the government of this vast empire, he has been animated by the one sole, single-minded desire to add to the benefit of the people and the glory of British rule. What Viceroy in the face of official opposition would have ventured to appoint one of your own countrymen, though it be for a short time, to the high office of Chief Justice of Bengal, an office which is only inferior in point of dignity and status to that of the Commander-in-Chief of India and the Lieutenant-Governor of these provinces? From that day Lord Ripon lost caste with his countrymen. From that day he enthroned himself in the affections of the people of India. Such then is the attitude of this meeting with reference to Lord Ripon—an attitude which, I trust, reflects the cultivated sense of my educated countrymen throughout the empire. We condemn the *concordat*. And why? Because it accentuates those differences of race which it was the object of the Bill to remove. It is true the District Magistrate and the Sessions Judge, whether European or Native, shall claim and exercise the same jurisdiction over the European British subject. But how has this result been attained, how has this equality been established? By withdrawing, bit by bit, till the limits of a mathematical point have been fairly reached, the jurisdiction pertaining to these offices. The Magistrate of the District has ceased for all practical purposes to be a criminal officer. For the most paltry offence, it will be necessary for him to empanel a jury and to go through the elaborate

forms of a sessions trial ; and curiously enough, the Joint-Magistrate, his subordinate in status and inferior to him in experience, may try a very considerable percentage of the self-same cases, without the aid of a jury. This is an anomaly. But it is not so much against these anomalies that we protest, as against those invidious race-distinctions which the *concordat* accentuates and emphasizes. The odium of race-distinction is shifted from a limited class of judges and is associated with the status of the accused of every grade and of every class. A European British subject when brought up for trial before a District Magistrate or a Sessions Judge may claim the right of trial by jury. A native of India may not. And "why not ? Because we are told the Englishman is instinctively attached to the jury system, and that he regards it, as the citadel of his liberty. But who ever has heard of Englishmen in their own country claiming a right of trial by jury even before a Magistrate ? It will be said perhaps in reply that the Magistrate of the District has in fact been converted into a Sessions Judge, and that his punitive jurisdiction has been extended from three to six months' imprisonment. But, how has this been brought about ? By the curtailment of all independent jurisdiction. The Magistrate of the District cannot fine a man a rupee or send him to prison for a day without calling a jury to assist him. Is it not accentuating race distinctions by conferring the right of trial by jury upon European British subjects, but withholding it from our countrymen ? I have been told that the extension of the jury system to the people of this country in the interior, on the lines of the Anglo-Indian concession, is a very large question. And so it is. But it seems to me that the extension of the jury system to the Anglo-Indian community in the mofussil is a much larger and more complicated question than the one relating to our own countrymen ; for the simple reason that, in the mofussil, in consequence of the

limited number of the resident European population, it will not always be possible to find a jury; and this brings me to the question of administrative inconvenience. If it is not possible to find a jury in any district, the complainant, witnesses, and all persons connected with the prosecution will have to be shifted on like a foot-ball from one district to another, until, at last, a jury has been discovered. Is this adding to administrative convenience? Is it not seriously embarrassing the machinery of administration? But this is not all. I hold in my hand a paper which has been prepared by the kindly offices of a friend. It shows the districts, in which there are no covenanted Joint-Magistrates, and where the District Magistrate is the only covenanted magisterial officer. This paper is prepared from the Directory of 1883, and substantially it may be taken to be correct. We find that there are about ten districts in Bengal where there are no covenanted Joint-Magistrates, and in some of these districts, there is a considerable European population, as, for instance, in Jelpigoree, where we have so many as 29 tea concerns; in Malda where there are about six silk concerns, in Khulna where a new railway has been opened. How will the system work in these districts? Why, in every case of assault committed by a European British subject, it will be necessary for the District Magistrate to empanel a jury and to go through the tiresome forms of a sessions trial. Is this what is called adding to administrative convenience? At any rate, we natives of India look upon the matter in a different light. We consider the arrangement as involving the administrative machinery in hopeless embarrassment. But the greatest objection to the *concordat* has yet to be urged. And here we tread not upon the barren ground of sentiment, but deal with what affects the happiness and contentment of the people. It is one of the unspeakable blessings of British rule that it has ensured perfect security of life and property.

Throughout the broad dominions of the Queen, every subject of Her Majesty, from the highest to the humblest, enjoys perfect protection, as regards life and property. If then any law were introduced, or if any modification of any law were attempted, which would even remotely tend to confer immunity upon any privileged class, in respect of offences committed by that class, why it would be the duty of all subjects of Her Majesty to combine to protest against a result so deplorable. Now, it is apprehended that by the extension of the jury system to the Anglo-Indian community in the mafussil, our countrymen would be deprived of that protection under the law, to which they are entitled. The Anglo-Indian community in the mafussil form a small, and therefore a compact and sympathetic community. For a European British subject in the interior to be tried by a jury of his countrymen will practically amount to his being tried by a sympathetic body of friends: and in times of excitement, it is feared, the partiality of friendship will over-ride the sense of fairness of the Judge. I have no desire to rake up the embers of a dying controversy. Nor will it be for this meeting to reciprocate the wanton insult that has been so lavishly heaped upon us, within the last twelve months. But I ask in all truthfulness—I put the question to all impartial men, whatever might be their nationality, to whatever race they might belong—would the man Meares ~~ever~~ been convicted by a jury of his own countrymen? We know what followed upon his conviction. There was a violent outburst of indignation on the part of the Anglo-Indian community. The Magistrate who convicted the man was condemned. The Chief Justice who affirmed the sentence was reviled. The Lieutenant-Governor who refused a pardon was censured, and at length when the whole fabric of that agitation had melted away, the agitators, fortifying themselves with legal opinion, brandished it before the faces of those

whom they had vainly hoped to coerce into submission. But we have been told that the jury system is conferred upon the Anglo-Indian community, on the understanding that it shall not be converted into an instrument for the protection of offenders. We know not how it is possible to bring about such a result. But a suggestion comes to us from Bombay, made by a barrister of considerable eminence in that town, Mr. Mehta, which seems to me to be entitled to consideration. Mr. Mehta says that the complainant should have the right of appeal in case of acquittal. The appeal should not lie to the Executive Government, which will decide these things in a hole-and-corner fashion, but to a court of law, where the merits of the case will be discussed, and the free lights of publicity will ensure the ends of justice.

But I have another objection to offer to the *concordat*. One of the objects of the original Ilbert Bill was to remove a hardship that pressed upon the native Covenanted Civilians. It was urged that by reason of the race disqualification, which curtailed their jurisdiction, they could not be appointed to the more eligible districts, where there was a considerable element of European population. Some of you must have read the letter of the Calcutta Correspondent to the *Times* newspaper in which, he cites the case of a native Civilian who could not be appointed at Dacca but had to be transferred elsewhere, because there was a considerable European population in the Dacca district. It is true the disqualification has been removed as regards the District Magistrate. But it remains as far as the native Joint-Magistrate is concerned. He will continue to be excluded from such districts as Dacca, Bankipore; and indeed there will now be a greater reason for this exclusion, as under the existing arrangements, the brunt of the criminal work will fall upon the Joint-Magistrate, who alone in the case of European British subjects will exercise summary jurisdiction.

Such are our objections to the *concordat*. We regret, deeply regret, that the Government should have agreed to this settlement. But do we wish that the Bill should be withdrawn? I say, No. Let the amended Bill pass, with such safeguards as will prevent a failure of justice, and with the extension of the jury system to our countrymen. Under such circumstances, with these safeguards and with this concession, the *concordat* will come to be regarded as the first of a series of progressive reforms. These reforms will have to be perfected by us in the future, by the assiduous practice of those arts of constitutional agitation, which have saved many a country and which will yet save India. You have seen before you, and with your own eyes, the triumph of a great agitation. I would ask you to imitate the persistency and firmness of the Anglo-Indian agitators, discarding, of course, their bitterness and violence. The Ilbert Bill has indeed led to a rancorous controversy. But there is a bright side to the picture which is not to be overlooked. The Ilbert Bill has called forth an awakening of national life, unparalleled in the annals of this country. If we can utilize this feeling, deepen it, turn it into a salutary channel, an abundant harvest of good is promised to us and to our children's children, even unto remote generations. Be assured of this, that England, the august mother of free nations, is ever foremost in her sympathy with those, who are struggling for their rights. The same measure of sympathy will be extended to us, as has been extended to others, if we earnestly appeal to England. Let that appeal be made. Let the great voice of the nation be heard, and then will come the response from the English people, which, by abolishing race distinctions, and conferring on us, in full measure, the franchise of the British subject, will pave the way for the final and complete assimilation of India into the Empire of Britain.

THE  
CIVIL SERVICE QUESTION  
AND  
THE NATIONAL FUND.

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*The following speech was delivered by Baboo Surendra Nath Banerjea at a public meeting of the inhabitants of Lahore, held at the Tribune Office, Lahore, on Sunday, the 8th May 1881, with a view to consider the Civil Service question and the desirability of raising subscriptions in aid of the National Fund. Sirdar Dyal Sing Majeetia was in the Chair.*

GENTLEMEN,

I deem it a privilege to be allowed to take part in the proceedings of this meeting. Before, however, I address myself to the important questions you have been discussing, you will permit me to discharge a personal obligation. I have to express my sense of deep gratitude to the people of Lahore and indeed to my countrymen of the Punjab at large, for the tokens of sympathy which I received from them on a recent, and memorable occasion in my life. A demonstration, so universal and so spontaneous, has made a deep and abiding impression on my mind. I never knew that I occupied such a place in the affections of my countrymen or that my humble services were so highly valued by you. God willing, it shall be the aim and endeavour of my

life to prove myself worthy of your confidence and of that approbation which has been so lavishly bestowed upon me. I feel myself overpowered by a sense of unredeemed duties, and I shall deem myself fortunate, even if in part, I am able to do justice to them.

You have to-day adopted a resolution in favour of a memorial to the Secretary of State, praying that the maximum limit of age for the Open Competitive Examination should be raised to 21 years, and you have further appointed a Committee to raise subscriptions in aid of the National Fund. It is needless for me to say much in support of the first part of your proceedings. So far back as the year 1833, the Charter Act removed a great disability from natives of India, in respect of employment in public offices. The 87th Section of the Charter Act laid down that "no native of the said territories (meaning British India) nor any natural-born subject of His Majesty resident therein shall by reason of his religion, place of birth, descent, colour or any of them be disabled from holding any office under the East India Company." That was more than half a century ago, and since then these words have received a higher sanction and a more solemn ratification. On the first of November 1858, Her Gracious Majesty the Queen was pleased to assume the direct government of the country; and on that solemn and memorable occasion, Her Majesty issued a Proclamation. It was a declaration of the policy that was to guide the future government of the country. In that Proclamation our Gracious Sovereign announced; "It is our further will that, so far as may be, our subjects of whatever race or creed be freely and impartially admitted to all offices in our service, the duties of which they may be qualified, by their education, ability and integrity duly to discharge." Mark the circumstances connected with the announcement of this proclamation. The country had just then

passed through the horrors of a great Mutiny ; the Queen had assumed the direct government of the Empire ; and now for the first time, the personal relationship between sovereign and subject had been established. It was upon such an occasion that the Proclamation was issued, and Her Majesty invoked the blessing of the Almighty God to bear witness to the solemnity of her plighted word. Has that solemn Proclamation been fulfilled, or does it remain the mere barren expression of a benevolent intention which has found but partial recognition in the actions of the Government of India ? It will not be for me to say one word in disparagement of a document, so memorable and proceeding from an authority justly entitled to our highest veneration. But I will quote the words of a late viceroy of India. Lord Lytton in addressing the Convocation of the Calcutta University in 1876, declared that the Proclamation " yet remains inadequately redeemed." Some of the speakers, and especially my friend, Pundit Ramnarain, have dwelt with just emphasis upon the inefficiency to the Civil Service which the reduction in the limit of age is calculated to bring about. I would, however, prefer to take a higher and a more unassailable stand. I would appeal to the Proclamation and to that alone. I would confine myself to within the four corners of that memorable document. The Proclamation, the whole Proclamation, nothing but the Proclamation is to be our watch-word, our battle-cry, the gospel of our political redemption. I would go up to the Secretary of State and I would tell him :—" You are the custodian of the honour of your Queen and of our Sovereign. Here is this reduction in the limit of age which interferes with the fulfilment of the Gracious Proclamation of Her Majesty and frustrates the beneficent purposes of a noble policy. Will you allow such a rule to remain in force—will you not cancel it ? I am greatly mistaken if any Secretary of State, unless he

has ceased to be an Englishman can resist an appeal made in such a form and in such terms.

The Secretary of State in his reply to the deputation of the British Indian Committee observed that so many as twenty-eight natives of India had appeared at the Open Competitive Examination, since the reduction of the limit of age. I presume Lord Kimberley wants us to assume that the new rules have not interfered with the prospects of success, on the part of Indian candidates. Now it must be obvious to the meanest understanding—my young friends who are here in such large numbers know it to their cost—that it is one thing to appear at an examination and quite a different thing to pass it successfully. Twenty-eight candidates appeared, it is true. But how many passed? That is the crucial question. Only one passed—the glorious unit! Out of twenty-eight, only one passed, representing barely three per cent. of the candidates who appeared! But this is not all. Let us proceed a step further. I am anxious to make the demonstration mathematically complete. I will not allow the Secretary of State a loop-hole for escape. We have before us the fact that from 1876, when the rule reducing the limit of age came into force, up till 1883, only a single native of India out of twenty-eight has been successful in these examinations. Now let us take a corresponding number of years previous to the reduction of the limit of age. We find that from 1868 to 1875, fourteen natives of India appeared at the Open Competitive Examination, and out of that number so many as eleven passed or fully eighty per cent. We have therefore this fact clearly established that whereas previous to the reduction of the limit of age, during a given number of years fully eighty per cent. of the Indian candidates were successful. Since the reduction barely three per cent. have been successful, Is it possible to resist this conclusion or to support any

other? But I am prepared to go a step further. I am prepared to shew that if there has been this marked unsuccess, it has not been due to any want of interest on the part of our youthful countrymen, as regards the Civil Service Examinations. On the contrary, this interest has been steadily on the increase and in the face of difficulties which ought to have produced a very different result. For what are the facts? We find that whereas during the seven years preceding the reduction of the limit of age only fourteen candidates appeared, in the seven years following the reduction, the number had become twenty-eight or had just doubled itself. It thus appears that our youthful countrymen, notwithstanding the newly-created difficulties which lay in their way, went on manfully to the struggle, and if they did not succeed, they fell like martyrs,—the victims of an unjust regulation which had been made on purpose to exclude them from the Civil Service of their own country.

But the Secretary of State proceeded to tell the deputation, we presume, as some consolation to their disappointed feelings, that there was the Native Civil Service which included one-sixth of the appointments in the Covenanted Service and which was reserved exclusively for our countrymen. I do not wish to say a single harsh-word about the Native Civil Service. But really there is a great difference in status between the European and the Native Civil Service. The admission to the one is regulated by a severe competitive test. The admission to the other is a mere matter of favour. Our rulers practically tell us;—“ We Europeans must find admission into the service by the open door of competition and merit. You natives of the country must get in, as best you may by the back-door of favouritism.” I believe I rightly interpret the feelings of our countrymen, when I say that we want fair play and no favour in this as indeed

in all other matters. Make the test as difficult and as severe as you like, but apply it with the most rigid fairness and with the strictest justice to natives and Europeans alike. So long as you do not do this, we shall never cease to complain, never cease to agitate. If our English rulers do not want us in the Civil Service, why don't they say so frankly and in a straight-forward manner? Why have recourse to this subterfuge, so unworthy of English statesmanship and of the English character? For after all, let it never be forgotten that the English Empire in India rests not so much upon physical force or upon military prowess as upon the respect we feel for the honour and the moral worth of the English people. Let no Secretary of State in mere wantonness immolate this great bulwark of British power in India. But we educated natives of India and especially the people of Bengal have been called seditious, disloyal, reeking with the spirit of rebellion. And this serious charge is brought against us, because foresooth, we complain, we agitate, we seek the redress of our just grievances. Let me ask—who are they that are truly loyal? Those who would perpetuate blunders in the administration and thus sap the very sources of the happiness and contentment of the people? Or those who would point out to Government its mistakes and the perils which it may encounter in the prosecution of an unwise policy? A foreign Government, such as ours is, without the blessings of representative institutions, specially stands in need of such warning. For such a Government is necessarily ignorant of the views and ideas of the people. With the best of intentions it may commit mistakes. It may blunder where it intends to reform. Is it loyal to flatter where we should expostulate? If by loyalty is meant base, degrading, crouching sycophancy, then I plead guilty to the charge. But I understand loyalty in a very different sense. I regard it as

one of the noblest feelings that can warm the breast of man. It is the homage which the wisdom of man pays to law, to order, to the genius of a well-regulated constitution. Am I to be told that we the people of this country are disloyal, who have never raised their little fingers against the foreign dynasties, who for a period of a thousand years and more governed the country and who often laid upon the people a burden grievous to be borne ? Is such a thing as a popular revolt known in Indian History ? When have the people risen against their rulers ? In the dark days of the Indian Mutiny, our countrymen rallied round the British Government. As Lord Canning said in his letter to the Maharaja of Krishnuggur, if there were thousands who had rebelled, there were at least tens of thousands who supported the cause of law and order. Be that as it may, for my own part, I am free to declare that I regard English rule as one of the dispensations of the God of history. England is here to regenerate an ancient people, and to make India once again the home of a civilization even nobler than what had marked the dawn of her early history. To a Government with such a purpose, and with such a destiny, we cannot be unfaithful or disloyal.

I am very glad, gentlemen, that you are going up to the Secretary of State with a prayer for the raising of the maximum limit of age for the Civil Service of India. This was precisely what you had prayed for, not many years ago. You were not then successful ; but you are resolved to renew the prayer. I congratulate you on your persistency in this matter. "Knock and it shall be opened" is a maxim which is not more true in religion than it is in politics. If we are unsuccessful the first time, let us renew the demand again and again, and if our cause is based upon justice, and if we are in earnest, victory must crown our efforts.

This leads me to the question of the National Fund—a grand universal Indian fund, for purposes of constitutional agitation. Let there be no misconception, as regards the character and the scope of this fund. Let it be understood that it is not to be employed with a view to embarrass the Government but rather to help it to fulfil its promises and to perform its solemn duty by the people. It is not by any means a menace against the Government. It is to be used for the purposes of lawful, constitutional agitation. We may petition, we may complain, we may protest; but we do nothing, which, in the remotest degree, will have the semblance of illegality about it. The constitution we adore and we venerate. Armed with the forces of the constitution, we shall fight the battles of the country and we shall conquer. Now what is this national fund—upon what purposes is it to be used, and how is it to be used? Those are very legitimate questions and you may reasonably expect an answer from me. But I may with equal reason refuse to enter into their consideration. I am a Journalist and as such it is my duty to read the newspapers; and what do I find? I find that, with exceptions here and there, Bengal and Bombay, Madras and Upper India, demand, through their accredited organs, the creation of the National Fund. It is sufficient for me to know that there is this great national demand. I take my stand upon the basis of the national will. The nation wants the fund—great is the nation—let the will of the nation be done.

But this is not all. The creation of the Fund is dictated by the clearest considerations of political expediency. The times are out of joint, or else we should not have witnessed that bitterness of feeling, that strange alienation between the two races which a small measure of justice provoked. We should have rejoiced, if it were a passing cloud that cast its transient shadows upon relations that for the most part

were happy or genial. But that was not to be. It assumed a definite form and the semblance of permanence. A Defence Association was formed with objects avowedly hostile to your interests. One would have supposed that after its great victory over the Government the Association would retire from its chosen field of labour and rest upon its laurels. But the Association apparently is resolved to obtain fresh laurels. It has recently issued a manifesto, to the contents of which I would venture to solicit your attention. The manifesto claims on behalf of Europeans a class of appointments which had hitherto been exclusively reserved for the children of the soil. You are probably aware that there is a ruling of the Secretary of State which lays down that in certain departments all appointments carrying a salary of Rs. 200 per mensem and upwards shall be conferred upon natives of the country, and that there shall be no departure from this rule except with the sanction of the Secretary of State. This is a rule which as you know, is more honoured in the breach than in the observance thereof. But even its theoretical acceptance is apparently disagreeable to the Defence Association. The Association calls itself the Defence Association, I presume, out of pure modesty, but really it is, essentially aggressive in its policy, and in its programme. I put it to you to say whether you will permit the ruin of your political interests to take place without a single effort to protect them, without a single effort to avert the blow? I do not exaggerate matters in the least, when I say that unless you have a Defence Fund of your own (a National Fund as I call it) you will not be able to cope with the organization, the resources and the influence of the Defence Association. If we had a National Fund last year, we should have seen a very different termination to the Ilbert Bill controversy. Politics is the science of opportunities. We must strike at the right moment, or we can never be sure of victory. Now

we must have funds to do so—a permanent fund from which we can always draw and upon which we can always fall back. Hence the necessity for the creation of the National Fund.

But this is not all. There are other reasons of a very weighty character which justify the creation of the National Fund. I think, I speak the unanimous sense of this meeting and of the bulk of my countrymen when I say that the present Government of India is one of the most honest and benevolent that we have ever had. It is not for me to anticipate the verdict of history, but if I am permitted to take a forecaste of things future, this I will say that when the present shall have vanished into the ever-receding past, when the animosities of the present hour shall have given place to the dominance of the historic judgment, then the fullest justice will be done to the statesmanship and philanthropy of the eminent nobleman who holds in his hands the destinies of the many millions of the people of India. Lord Ripon's reign marks the beginning of a new policy. It is coincident with a new departure in Indian history. But this policy has not yet taken firm root in Indian Administration. There are rocks ahead, upon which it might be stranded at any moment. The Conservative leaders are by no means friendly to the new policy. Lord Salisbury the other day in "one" of his addresses described Lord Ripon's policy "as sentimental." Now Lord Salisbury might any day become premier, and then perhaps an attempt would be made by this practical statesman, assisted by his colleagues, to upset that policy which he is pleased to call sentimental, but which has won the gratitude of the Indian people. Now I ask you to consider whether you are not bound by every consideration of common sense and of patriotic duty to prepare yourselves against the evil day which may come upon you, when perhaps you least expect it. The Conservative leaders have apparently abandoned

the traditional policy of their party which dictated the Proclamation. They will be assisted by the Defence Association with all their organization and all their resources. Are we to have no fund of our own, no organization, no means of protecting our dearest political interests ? We want nothing more than what is guaranteed to us by the Proclamation. But our rights under the Proclamation we must have, in spite of the Defence Association, in spite of the Conservative leaders. If so, the national fund is a necessity to enable us to fight in a lawful and constitutional manner the battles of our country. The Defence Association has raised its lakh and fifty thousand Rupees. Where is our fund to protect our interests and to secure our rights ? Every one of us is anxious to lay by something for the benefit of himself and of his children. No one can object to such a thing. But beyond the circle of the family and of the near and the dear ones, there is the nation whose interests are undying and permanent. Will you do nothing for the benefit of the nation ? Will you not lay by something out of your earnings for the sake of your countrymen ?

I have heard it said as an argument against the National Fund that there are no common questions which affect the whole of India—that our questions are sectional and provincial and not national and imperial. I deny the proposition altogether. My countrymen of the Punjab, your grievances are our grievances, your wants are ours. When, not long ago, you were fighting the battle of high English education in the Punjab, you had all India at your back. When not many years ago, the shadows of grim famine befell the Madras Presidency, the cry of sympathy rose from all parts of India. At the present moment, the graduates of Upper India are energetically striving to find admission into the higher ranks of the public service of their province ; and is it not true that all India is in earnest sympathy with their

aspirations and with their prayers ? We all live under the same Government and the same institutions; we are brought up under the same influences ; we speak but different dialects of the same common tongue. Who can separate brothers, united by common interests and by the tenderest ties of affection ? But this is not all. I am prepared to point out a number of questions of national importance, to the satisfactory solution of which the National Fund may be applied.

You have considered the Civil Service question in relation to the matter of age. There is another aspect of the question which deserves consideration. There is really no reason why the Open Competitive Examination should not be held in this country ? Greatly as I value a visit to England I ask is it essentially necessary for the purposes of the statesman or the administrator ? Did Dinkar Rao, or Salar Jung or 'Madhav Rao pass any portion of their time in England, before they became famous as statesmen ? Our rulers declare all appointments in the Civil Service as being open to competition. But the examination is held in London and nowhere else. Now I ask is it not unfair—is it not throwing very great difficulties in the way of our young men to oblige them to leave their country, upon the mere chance of passing a difficult competitive examination ? It is melancholy to contrast India with other countries, such as for instance Java and Ceylon. Java, as you are aware, is under the Dutch who are credited with all kinds of wicked and tyrannical proceedings. But in Java and under the Dutch Government, half the appointments are competed for in the island. Take again the case of Ceylon—that fortunate island which flourishes under the colonial administration, and which has so many things to teach India. Here too a portion of the appointments is competed for, in the island. It has been reserved for the British Indian Government to present to the world the spectacle of a great

administration which obliges the ambitious youth of a subject race to expatriate themselves at a tender age and at a great sacrifice, for the boon forsooth of being permitted to serve their own country. "The thing will not be believed a hundred years hence" said a high officer of Government to me the other day. Englishmen reading the history of their country will find it difficult to understand how such an anomaly could exist in any part of their empire.

Take again the question of army expenditure. What is the numerical strength of the British Indian army. About 300,000 men. What is the cost of that army ? About 17 crores of rupees or nearly one-third of the net revenue of the Empire. Now be pleased to follow me across mountains, seas and deserts, and for a moment fix your attention upon the grandest military empire in the world—the Empire of Germany. What is the numerical strength of the German army ? One million of men. What is the cost of this army ? 17 crores of rupees, precisely the same amount as our army of 300,000 men cost. We have, therefore before us this fact that the most efficient army in the world supporting the grandest military empire in Europe and numbering three times the British Indian army, is maintained at the same cost ! We thus pay for our army three times what the subjects of the German empire pay for theirs. No doubt it is the proud privilege of the British subject to pay and to pay heavily in the shape of taxes. But the country is grievously over-burdened with taxation ; and both Europeans and Natives should combine for a reduction in the military expenditure. This is one of the subjects which the National Fund might with advantage take up. It embraces the interests of every class of the community.

Take again the question of representative government for India. Representative government for India ! Why, many will regard it as a dream, an utopia, the phantom of

an excited imagination. But the dreams of one age become the realities of the next. Those dreams of political greatness which we are accustomed to, indulge in and which appear before the mind's eye and pass away like the fleeting *mirage* of the desert, are ideals which after-generations will strive after and endeavour to attain to. The seeds of truth sown in the most uncongenial soil produce an abundant harvest. Eighteen hundred years ago, the inspired prophet of Nazareth murmured forth in feeble and tremulous accents the saving truths of his religion. He was harassed, persecuted, treated with scorn and contumely and at last crucified. Eighteen hundred years have rolled away and the religion of Christ has now been accepted by the most advanced portion of the human race, and it has softened their hearts and has tempered their civilization. Thirteen hundred years ago, the prophet of Arabia, flying from the knife of hireling assassins, proclaimed the principles of monotheism. No one would believe him, no one would accept his heaven-sent mission, save the devoted Khadija and the beloved Ali. But he persevered, went on with his glorious work; and before Mahomed was gathered to his fathers, one half of Asia had acknowledged him as the prophet of God and the teacher of a heavenly religion. I fully believe that our feeble aspirations regarding representative government will one day become a cherished reality which, while it would add to the benefit of the people will also contribute to the consolidation of British rule.

Gentlemen, there is another feature of the National Fund movement which, in my humble judgment, should recommend it to the universal acceptance of our countrymen, whatever may be their race or creed. It is the grand movement for the unification of the Indian races. I am not giving expression to a platitude. Every man who will subscribe will have a right to vote; will be, in short, a unit in a

grand, national organization. The organization will be animated by a common life, by a common purpose and by kindred hopes and aspirations.

Now I ask you is it possible for you to withhold your sympathies from such a movement? When its success has been assured, it will be the worthy monument of your patriotism. We want six lakhs of rupees, not exactly from this meeting, though I should be glad to have it. Is it so very difficult to raise this money? We are here in India two hundred and fifty millions of people. If each one of us were to pay a cowrī, why we could raise not six but six times six lakhs of rupees. Why should not this be done, and what is there to prevent an organization being formed which will bring about such result? In lower Bengal, the devout Wahabi lays aside a handful of rice from his morning meal for the benefit of his missionaries. The devout Hindoo consecrates his first fruits by offering them to the god of his sires. Have we become so degenerated, so degraded through the influences of education that we are incapable of the smallest measure of self-sacrifice? We spend thousands and tens of thousands every year upon nautches, festivities and musical entertainments. But are we dead to all feelings of patriotism and to the commonest duties of the citizen? We have had enough of these entertainments. Oh! let us not hold high carnival over the prostrate remains of a fallen country.

From you my countrymen of the Punjab, we expect substantial help in this matter. Punjab is the primitive home of the Aryan people. Here were enacted some of the grandest events in our history. Here flourished the conscript fathers of our race. Here were developed that noble language and that immortal literature which even now excite the admiration of modern Europe. Here on the margin of its sacred streams, beneath the vaulted canopy of heaven, our vedic

fathers chaunted those hymns which for beauty, pathos and sublimity remain unsurpassed among the productions of the human mind. The ground which we tread is holy, consecrated by the dust of immortal sires ; the air which we breathe is sanctified by the breath of ancient India. Methinks we are moving among the departed spirits of the great past. Here, more than in any other part of India, the call to duty comes home to our minds with irresistible power. But great as is the past, the Punjab has also been great in times compassed by the recollections of the modern historian. Less than three hundred years ago, the illustrious founder of Sikhism, the meek and gentle Nanak proclaimed 'the worth of your province'. Oh ! let us prove ourselves worthy of the past and of the noble examples with which the annals of modern Punjab abound ? We are living in stirring times. The marriage of the east and the west is about to be consummated. The birth of a new epoch has been heralded. A new India is springing forth into life. The epoch carries with it its responsibilities, and heavy are those responsibilities. I will not enlarge upon them. But the genius of the place points to a moral and teaches a lesson. Nanak preached the principle of Indian unity. Standing in the presence of his great example and on the soil which gave him birth, let me emphasize his lessons and proclaim his principles. Let all past jealousies and dissensions, let all bitterness and hatred kindled by differences of religion or race, be forgotten—let us realize the fact that whether Hindoos or Mussulmans, Parsees or Sikhs, we are all natives of India, having the same common interests to maintain and the same common sacrifices to make. Let there be a practical recognition of the principles of Nanak here and elsewhere—let there be established throughout the country the utmost sympathy, the most cordial relations between the varied races and nationalities, then not only will the National Fund have

become a reality, but the cause of Indian progress will have received an impetus, from which the most beneficent results may be expected.

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THE BENGAL GOVERNMENT  
AND  
THE CALCUTTA MUNICIPALITY.

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*At a Meeting of the Municipal Commissioners of the Town of Calcutta held at the Town Hall, on Thursday the 31st August 1884, to consider a letter of the Bengal Government proposing to appoint a Commission to enquire into the sanitary administration of the Town, Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea moved the second resolution which ran as follows:—*

“ That this Meeting deeply regrets the action taken by the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, in censuring the Commissioners of the Town of Calcutta, especially upon an *ex parte* statement contained in a memorial submitted to his Honour, and without giving them an opportunity of being heard, and this Meeting records its respectful but firm protest against the one-sided manner in which the Commissioners have been condemned for their sanitary administration of the town.”

In moving the Resolution, Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea spoke as follows:—

“MR. CLAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,

Before I address myself to this Resolution, you will allow me to express my sense of astonishment, which verged indeed upon something like bewilderment, as I listened to the speech of Mr. Buckland and that of Mr. Abdur Rahman.

I can understand Mr. Buckland making a speech of that description ; the thing is perfectly intelligible ; we have only to appeal to his own standard of what the duties of a nominee of the Government are. Not long ago in this Corporation, where nominees and elected Commissioners are accustomed to do their duty by the rate-payers and the Government in a harmonious and conscientious manner, Mr. Buckland proceeded to enunciate the amazing proposition that it is the duty of the nominee of the Government to support that Government through good report and evil report, and it does infinite credit to this Corporation that the statement was repudiated by those whom the Government has honoured by inviting them to sit at this board. But when I come to consider the speech of my friend, Mr. Abdur Rahman, I can scarcely repress my sense of astonishment. (*A voice, more than astonishment.*) Mr. Abdur Rahman belongs to a noble profession—the profession of the Bar—that noble profession which in times of difficulty and danger has stood forth as the champion of municipal freedom and of constitutional rights. I am more than surprised that a gentleman belonging to such a profession should be forgetful of its traditions, and ask us to submit tamely to insults and unconstitutional usage at the hands of the Government. I trust that from some of the gentlemen who are members of the Bar, and who are members of this Corporation, there will come an emphatic repudiation which will indicate the sense of that noble profession in respect to the action of the Government of Bengal. Gentlemen, we have been told that the Government need not confine itself to within the four corners of the Act. Am I to understand that we live in an age of anarchy—that the reign of law has come to an end under British rule ? Our rights, the rights of this Corporation, have been secured to us in language as explicit as the resources of the English

language can supply. And yet Mr. Buckland would tell us that this Act is of no avail, that the Government may go behind the Act, behind the Constitution, and claim unheard-of privileges. I have never before heard doctrines so astounding, publicly avowed by a responsible officer of the Government. I trust that from other members of the civil service who are members of this Corporation, there will come a repudiation, emphatic and unequivocal, of this astounding doctrine. We live in a reign of law, where the constitution guards our privileges, and the Government dares not act except according to the lines of the law. The Government itself says in the most express terms that this Commission which it is proposed to appoint is a commission that is not warranted by the law. But the Government is very considerate. It has been very kind and forbearing ! How has it been considerate ? It has condemned us unheard, and threatened us with pains and penalties, unless we submit to its arbitrary demands ! The Government practically tell us this—"Here is a Commission we propose to appoint, submit to it. If you do not, there is Section 28 looming in the distance, and the thunders of that section will overwhelm you ?" I ask, is not this an unworthy threat on the part of the Government ? I ask, is it not most improper to hold this section over us *in terrorem* ? Would it not have been a more proper proceeding for the Government to have proceeded under section 28 not exactly in the way suggested by Mr. Sykes, but to have called from us an explanation, and then to have done what it thought best under the circumstances ? But we protest against this illegal, arbitrary, unconstitutional, and unheard-of interference on the part of the Government with the constitutional rights of this Municipality. Sir, with censure we are familiar. Sir Ashley Eden used to censure us from year to year, and we thought nothing of the matter, because we

knew what the professions and the principles of the man were. He regarded representative institutions as a sickly plant in their own native soil. How much more uncongenial were they in the soil of India. But Mr. Rivers Thompson, from the first moment that he assumed the reins of government, stood as the champion of Local Self-Government and as the accredited lieutenant of his great chief, whose mission it was to introduce the principles of Local Self-Government into this country. How keen therefore is our regret, how bitter our disappointment, to find that we are condemned by such a Governor ; and, not only condemned but condemned unheeded, and threatened with extreme perils, unless we submit to his demands ! The veriest criminal caught with his hands reeking with the blood of his innocent victim, and convicted after the most elaborate trial, is asked before sentence is pronounced upon him, whether he has any thing to say in his defence. This mark of justice is extended to the most heinous offender, but it has not been shown to us, the chief representative body in the country, by the apostle of Local Self-Government. Is our case so desperately bad that to ask us for an explanation would be to waste time ? That seems to have been the opinion of Mr. Buckland ; but I can assure him by the crushing weight of the logic of facts that we have an answer so irresistible and conclusive that the Government of Bengal, after it has received it, will not venture to go further. My friend, Babu Kally Nath Mitter, will enter into those considerations, but let me give Mr. Buckland a foretaste of them. It has been said that we budgeted only Rs. 1,10,000—and we are asked "why we did not budget Rs. 1,50,000 ?" If that question had been put to me, I would say, "It is our pleasure ; we are responsible to the rate-payers ; we are the guardians of the city, and we have budgeted that sum because we have thought it to be a sum ample." But we have a further answer.

We budgeted it on the understanding, in which I can be borne out, that in case more funds were wanted we should be willing to give them, and it is a fact that the Town Council and the Corporation have been only too willing to help the Chairman when he asked for funds. Then it is asked why it is that year after year we have spent only Rs. 88, 000, and no more ? What is the explanation ? The Government is directly responsible for this result. We have to acquire land, but who is to do it for us ? Now I learn at this meeting that for the last five months the Collectorate has not made over to us the land we wanted. The Government officials are responsible, but we who are elected by the people are blamed. Then, Sir, there is another consideration which has to be borne in mind. A sum of Rs. 70,000, remained unexpended. Well, that was not expended owing, I believe, to the same circumstance. The Deputy Collector died unfortunately, and there was no one to acquire the land for us, and consequently we could not spend the money. And although there were all these impediments in our way, the Government will not take notice of them, but is only too eager to censure us. Does not Mr. Buckland regard the foretaste of this explanation as something to be brought into the opposite scale in favour of the Municipality ? The case is really not so desperate. Look at the facts and figures again upon which the memorialists take their stand. They rely upon the death-rate of March and April, arising chiefly from cholera. Now everybody knows that cholera, by its suddenness, and the havoc it creates, has about it all the characteristics of a great visitation of Providence. What doctor can control the tidal wave of cholera as it rolls along, decimating thousands ? France at the present moment is the seat of that terrible scourge. Toulon and Marseilles have been attacked, and does the French Government propose to disenfranchise the municipalities of

those towns ? Is there not an explanation forthcoming ? But we have something more to urge. Mark the month in which cholera broke out in its utmost virulence. It was the closing days of the exhibition in March. A large influx of people from all parts of the empire had come into Calcutta, and this must partially account for the prevalence of the disease. And then there was an abnormal want of rain ;—what, Government or municipality can control the rain, or wind, or weather ? The Municipality is not to blame. The memorialists have neither facts, arguments, nor evidence. But what they want in argument they make up for by the virulence of their attack, and by the unmeasured denunciations in which they indulge. One of the chief movers against the Corporation is a Judge of the High Court, but his ermine will not protect him. His judicial office will not avail him. Now that he has entered the arena as a combatant, he must give and take. Mr. Justice Cunningham tells us that the Corporation is a scandalous satire upon Local Self-Government. The memorialists tell us that we have not an adequate sense of our responsibilities. Language such as this has been applied to the Corporation, but not a word of rebuke was passed by the Government of Bengal in referring to it. If the Collector of a district had been spoken of in this way, would not the Government have returned that memorial as impertinent and improper ? But the Government practically endorses the insult by seeking to give effect to the memorial. I do not wish to be harsh upon Mr. Justice Cunningham, but what would he think if somebody were to tell him that from day to day he enacts a satire in the highest Court of the land ? What would his feelings be, if in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, that statement were persevered in. I am sorry, he should have provoked the remark, but I give him distinctly to understand that when a judge lays aside his ermine and the calm dignity

of his judicial office and mixes himself up in political affairs, he has no right to expect more consideration than any other combatant. I do not wish to be harsh, but it is necessary to know something of the sponsors of this movement in order to judge of the movement itself, and I will invite an Anglo-Indian writer to give his testimony in reference to this matter. He says;—Mr. Justice Cunningham is a Barrister Judge, and he is a phenomenon among Barrister Judges; his knowledge of law and notions of justice are equally exceptional; he fills a post for which nature does not appear to have designed him, nor his education qualified him. (A member:—That is out of place here). Yes, but when we are told we are a satire upon Local Self-Government, we have every right to retort. I think Mr. Cunningham would do better by giving more attention to the clearing off of that unhappy block which hampers business in the High Court than mixing himself up in these political matters. In reading over the list of names attached to this memorial, it is with very great regret that I find the names there of High Court Judges. The Judges are entitled to our highest consideration; they are the guardians of the law; the protectors of our lives and property; they ought, however, to steer clear of political controversies. They are not allowed a seat in the House of Commons, and I think some such law ought to be enacted here. Well, Sir, so much about Mr. Justice Cunningham. It is now necessary to say something about Dr. Payne, the gentleman who next to Mr. Cunningham occupies the foremost place in this movement. Dr. Payne was our Health Officer, but he is now Surgeon-General of Bengal. As Health Officer he was twice censured by this Municipality and his pay was cut down from Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 700. I can only express the hope that in this agitation he is not animated by personal feeling or a sense of personal wrong.

Now, Sir, the next matter to which I would call your attention is the manner in which these signatures have been obtained, because they will decide to some extent the value to be attached to the memorial. At the public meeting held the other day, a gentleman read a letter to the chairman in which the writer said that he had signed the memorial under the impression that it was the Commissioners who were to appoint the Commission. Another gentleman spoke to the same effect, and now we have the testimony of an English paper as to the way in which the signatures were obtained. It appears from the *Statesman* newspaper that the Venerable Archdeacon Atlay interested himself in this matter. He could not go about himself, so they fixed upon an elderly Deputy Collector, who having spare time on his hands and not knowing how to use it thought it could not be better employed than in seeking to injure this Corporation. So Mr. Heysham became a touter for signatures. He goes to the Accountant-General's office and there the signature of the Accountant-General is obtained. The Deputy signs after him, the staff follows, and the whole office does likewise as a matter of course, and so on from office to office the career of conquest proceeds. These are facts capable of proof. Then the memorial was sent to Mr. Belchambers, and with the authority which he undoubtedly possesses, he obtained more than 100 signatures. Of course everybody was willing to oblige Mr. Belchambers, and thus it was, all his clerks signed—and most of them reside in Bhowanipur. How they became ratepayers of Calcutta it is difficult to say. Such then is the nature of the document, such are the prime movers and such is the manner in which the signatures were obtained. It is fitting, therefore, that the Corporation should record its protest against it. Of course it is a very great honour to be allowed to represent our countrymen at this Municipal Board—it is a much

coveted honour. But there is one thing which we are not prepared to do at the bidding of the rate-payers, or even at the bidding of the Government, namely to sacrifice our sense of self-respect. To protect the wounded dignity of the Corporation, to guard its inviolable rights and to prevent the repetition of insults of this kind, I invite you to enter a respectful, but at the same time a firm protest against the action of the Government of Bengal. With these remarks I beg to move the resolution I have read.

## LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT.

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*At a public Meeting of the Native inhabitants of Calcutta and its Suburbs held at the Town Hall, on Saturday the 18th February 1882, to take into consideration the question of local self-government, Babu Surendra Nath Banerjee moved the third resolution which ran as follows :—*

“ That this Meeting feels deeply grateful to his Excellency the Viceroy for his recent resolution, which seeks to confer upon the people of this country the inestimable boon of Local Self-Government, and ventures to express its earnest and confident hope that the measures adopted by his Excellency for the purpose will be of such a character as to secure a fair and satisfactory working of the scheme. And with this view this meeting would respectfully beg to make the following representations :—(1) That the constitution of the Local Boards and of the Municipalities should be based on the elective system. (2) That their Chairman should be an officer elected by them, and on no account be the Magistrate-Collector of the District. (3) That the functions and powers vested in the existing Committees should be increased in view of their amalgamation in the proposed Local Boards.”

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,—Some two years ago, when I had the honour of addressing a large audience of my countrymen, assembled in this very hall, under the auspices of the self-same Association, to express our congratulations on the accession of the Liberals to power, and on the great triumph which they had obtained over their

political opponents, I had ventured to remark that the question of self-government was looming in the not far-off distance, and that perhaps to the Liberal party would belong the credit and glory of finding a solution that would satisfy the aspirations of the nation, and at the same time meet the requirements of imperial rule. In my wildest dreams, in my most sanguine moments, I could scarcely bring myself to hope that my anticipations were so soon to be realised, and that what was merely an aspiration, feebly and tremulously uttered though vigorously felt, was so soon to become a great reality, that would in all probability change, and that within a short time, the whole course of Indian administration, and mark a memorable epoch in the history of our country. But so it has been willed by an over-ruling Providence, who is leading our country by steps, sure and slow, by the workings of His inscrutable wisdom to that goal when in the fulness of time she will take her place among the nations of the earth, the arbiter of her own destinies, subject to no other control save that which conscience and common sense may impose, or what England, our imperial mistress, may think fit to dictate. The dream has become a reality. From the depths of despondency and despair, the light of hope has peeped forth. The long black night of anxious suspense and wearisome travail is past and gone, and the sun of hope has risen on the firmament. The era of repression is about to disappear—that of Self-Government is about to commence. Centralisation is in its last gasp. Absolutism dies an unnatural death, throttled not by its natural executioners, the people, but by the respected head of the Indian Government, to whom it is impossible to refer at any meeting of our countrymen, without expressing towards him our sentiments of deep and heartfelt gratitude. The Resolution speaks of the inestimable boon of Local Self-Government. It will, indeed, be

an inestimable boon, if you are invested not merely with the semblance, but with the reality of Self-Government ; if you do not allow yourselves to be deluded by a mere shadow, but have placed within your reach the reality of power. Self-Government is the noblest school for the development of the highest faculties of the human mind. What is it that has made England what she is ? Is it her vast colonial possessions ? Is it the extent of her ever-spreading empire, upon which, it is said, the sun never sets ? Is it her army ? Is it her navy ? Is it even those wonderful commercial operations that extend from pole to pole ? Ah, no ! It is not these that have made England what she is, the pride and glory among men. It is rather that wonderful fabric of liberty which Englishmen have raised for themselves, and which constitutes their distinction and their title to the lasting gratitude of men. The institutions of England furnish a noble field for the exercise of the art of Self-Government. Here is the training-ground for the English people. Here are developed those energies and that talent and genius which have made Englishmen rulers of half the habitable globe. Have we anything in our institutions approaching to this ? We are accustomed to talk big of our educational system. Loud are the expressions of congratulation that escape from the lips of our orators and patriots, when they begin to descant upon the achievements of our rulers in the field of education. But let me ask, what is your education worth, when it has not received its finishing touch in the practical school of public life, when your talents and energies have not been developed by the responsibilities of high official position ? It was not in this way that our late Moslem rulers sought to conciliate the affections of an alien people, over whom they ruled for more than 800 years. The scions of the noble families whom Akbar conquered became the commanders of Mogul armies,

the rulers of Mogul provinces, the trusted advisers of the Mogul sovereign. And they repaid the kindness of their rulers with fervent gratitude. Man Singh, of the conquered house of Jeypur, carried the Mogul standard from the borders of Assam on the East to the frontiers of Cabul on the West. In those days of trouble and tribulation which cast their shadows on the declining years of Shah Jehan's reign, Jesswant Singh alone of the more considerable members of the Mogul aristocracy remained true to the throne and the sovereign whom he had served. Of course, it is idle to expect that our Christian rulers will learn from the example of heathen barbarians. Pledges are good things in their way, but self-interest is better. At any rate, it is much more pleasant to listen to the dulcet notes of that powerful impulse in the breast of man. There is, however, now to be a departure from the traditional policy of the Indian Government. A new landmark now appears, for the first time in Indian history. Before, however, I address myself to the Resolution of the Government of India, it becomes necessary that I should clear my ground. It is urged by many, and even by persons in authority, that we are unfit for Self-Government, and Lord Ripon is represented as forcing upon the country a measure for which it is not yet ripe. Are we then unfit for Self-Government? Let me ask, were the Romans more fit for Self-Government in the days of the Republic, or were the English people more fit at the time of Simon-de-Monfort, or even in the days of the Tudors? Let it not be forgotten that in primitive times, when the ancestors of the present European nations were roaming the forests as painted savages, our fathers were managing their own affairs in those village communities, the memory of which has not yet died out from the pages of history. Am I then to understand that, after having been for more than a century under British rule—after having lived for so long a period under

the beneficent influences of English civilization, we have become so far degraded and degenerated that we are unable to appreciate the principles or to practice the art of Self-Government. This is the inevitable conclusion to which the assumption leads, and it is on the face of it so absurd that I shall dismiss it without further consideration. But practically the question of our fitness for Self-Government has been set at rest by the decision of His Excellency the Viceroy, who, by his recent Resolution, has declared that it is his purpose to confer upon our countrymen the right to manage their own local concerns. I think, ladies and gentlemen, I speak the unanimous sense of this meeting, and of the native community at large, when I say that to Lord Ripon is due our deep and heartfelt gratitude for the great concession which he proposes to make. I believe, I only anticipate the verdict of history when I say that if Lord Ripon fulfils the promises of the early years of his administration, he will take his place amongst the most illustrious of his predecessors, by the side of the Metcalfes, the Bentincks and the Cannings, of Indian history. When two years ago Lord Ripon landed in Bombay, he said that he wished to be judged by his works. We desire no better test. We shall indeed judge him by his works. It is yet perhaps too early to form such a judgment, but this we may say, that his Lordship has begun well, and that we wish him god-speed in his noble mission.

Lord Ripon in his Resolution proposes that all the existing committees should be amalgamated into one, with the Magistrate-Collector as Chairman, and that certain heads of provincial expenditure, viz., Provincial and Public works, Education and Sanitation should be made over to local management. At least two-thirds of the members should consist of non-officials and the Municipalities should be relieved of all expenditure incurred for the maintenance

of the Police. It is upon these out-lines the Local Governments have been called upon to submit schemes of legislation. The Bengal Government, with, praise-worthy promptitude, has invited the opinion of Divisional Commissioners in a circular letter to which I am anxious to draw the attention of this meeting, for that Resolution expresses the views, as yet perhaps crude and immature, of the Government of Sir Ashley Eden. The circular letter starts with an admission. We are all told that the existing committees are inefficient. If so, the question naturally arises—Has the truth now for the first time dawned upon the mind of His Honour? If not, what was His Honour doing all this time? Why were no steps taken to remedy this state of things, which was not by any means creditable to the Government? It would be interesting to know what reply the Government has to make. But let us proceed. The letter makes no reference to the existing Road Cess Committees. Possibly this may be only an accidental omission. The letter says that the control of the Public Works Cess, the Government must retain in its own hands. It is a question as to whether the Dawk-cess should be managed by Government, or be made over to local control. The Lunatic Asylums must also be under the authority of Government. The Government must also superintend the working of the provisions of the Vaccination Act. It is, however, proposed to confirm and extend the powers of the Education Committees; the administration of the grant-in-aid allotment is to be made over to them. It will be seen that the Lieutenant-Governor proposes to make over but a small modicum of authority to the Local Boards; at the same time, His Honour is of opinion that it would be a distinct gain to the Local Boards to have on them the chief executive authorities of the district. Not a word is said in the whole of this letter regarding the elective system.

Is the omission accidental or is it wilful? I am inclined to think that the omission is wilful. Sir Ashley Eden is the sworn, the determined, the irreconcileable enemy of representative institutions. Not many years ago he, said that representative institutions were a sickly plant in their own native soil, and they were wholly out of place in a country like India. We have not yet forgotten the anathemas which from year to year used to be hurled against what was at that time believed to be the doomed Corporation of Calcutta. If, then, all reference to the elective system has been omitted on the ground that Sir Ashley Eden does not favour the introduction of the system in the constitution of the Local Boards, we protest against this omission with all the emphasis that we can command. The adoption of the elective system, I say, is essential to the success of the great experiment which is about to be tried. Who is it that will practically nominate members to the District Boards? Magistrate-Collectors undoubtedly. But the Magistrate-Collector must necessarily choose from a limited circle,—he cannot know every body in the district, whereas the people must necessarily have a wider field to choose from, and they would be better able than any foreign official to select the men who would be best fitted to serve them. Then, again, is it possible to expect anything like independence from the nominees of the Magistrate-Collector? Being nominated by the Magistrate, they cannot be expected to vote against him. Not long ago I heard a very funny story which fully confirms the proposition I am trying to establish. A gentleman who shall be nameless called, with a certain friend, upon the Vice-chairman of a great Municipality, and requested him to put his friend on the commission. What, do you think was the reply of the Vice-chairman? "I can't nominate, because your friend will vote against me." The gentleman who was quite equal to the occasion

observed that "he would undertake that his friend would always vote for the Vice-chairman" "Well, if you can guarantee that," observed the Vice-Chairman, "there is an end of the difficulty, and your friend shall be nominated." Now, I ask is it possible for any one who sits on the Municipal Board, with a condition such as the one I have referred to, to show the least feeling of independence in the performance of his responsible duties? The Commissioner is nominated by the Magistrate-Collector, and naturally enough he feels a moral obligation to vote for him. But it is not men of this class who are wanted on the commission. We want men of independence—men who can think and act for themselves, and will not be swayed by the authority of the Magistrate. I am deliberately of opinion, and you will agree with me in thinking, that such men are not to be had under any system of nomination.

As it is important that the District Board should be based upon the elective system, so it is equally necessary that they should be allowed the right to choose their own chairman. It would be a slur upon our countrymen in the mofussil to assume that there are not to be found men amongst them able to undertake the duties of the chairman of the District Board. At any rate we ought to protest against the Magistrate-Collector being appointed to this important office. Ladies and gentlemen, are you familiar with the officer who in the mofussil rejoices under the name of Magistrate-Collector. The Magistrate is a dreaded divinity. He is the impersonation of British authority, the embodiment of British power. He rules his district with more than sovereign authority. He wields more power than ever did a Persian satrap or a Napoleonic prefect. How great is his authority may be imagined from the excesses which he is occasionally guilty of, and which a lenient Government is only too ready to overlook. Poor Brahmo processionists are arrested, detain-

ed, and wantonly insulted, and yet when they complain in language at once temperate and dignified to the Head of the Government for redress, they are told it is only a misunderstanding ! It is a Comedy of Errors all round ? Are we really at a play-house looking at a theatrical performance, or are we on the arena of sober and practical life ? Is this the answer to be given to men writhing under a deep sense of wrong ? Then again a Magistrate applies to a high officer of Government one of the filthiest epithets of abuse in the Hindustanee language, and when the matter comes to the notice of the Head of the Government, what is the measure of justice dealt out to the injured officer ? The Urdu Dictionary receives an important addition and we are treated to an interesting definition of the word *Badzati* ! Henceforth that word is to bear a peculiar sense. It is no longer to mean the doings of a low-born villain, but shall be understood as bearing the much less offensive sense of persistence in misbehaviour,—with this reservation, however, that on the lips of European Government servants alone and for their benefit only, *Badzati* is to have the meaning now for the first time put upon it ! Urdu lexicographers, take note. "Cedite Romani Scriptores. Cedite Graii,"—Yield, Roman writers ; yield, Greek writers ; a Lieutenant-Governor is on the stage, and ye must bow to his authority not only in matters of administration, but also in those of language. Such then is that high officer whom in the mofusil they call Magistrate-Collector. The impunity with which he can abuse his power, invests him with a feeling of dread in the eyes of the people, and is it possible for the most-strong-minded native of India to oppose the views of such an officer ? As a matter of fact, the Magistrate-Collector has all his own way in the existing committees. He does what he likes, and his colleagues are merely ornamental nobodies. The member of the Road Cess or of the Muni-

cipal Committee has not the independence to oppose any of his measures. "Moulvie so and so, I want a road to be made leading to that indigo factory," exclaims the Magistrate. The good Moulvie knows perfectly well that the road is not wanted at all. But though conscience and duty are good things in their own way, the command of the Magistrate must be implicitly obeyed. Accordingly, he votes for the road. But when in the evening he has returned home and is safely ensconced in the midst of his friends, he fastens the doors of his room, closes the chinks in the wall, so that not even the sound of the human voice may be heard outside, and that no unseen spy may communicate the conversation to the Magistrate-Collector, as he thunders forth against the high-handed proceedings of that officer and condemns the vote he gave in the morning ! Such is the dread which the Magistrate inspires, and it is needless for me to say that the presence of such an officer on the Local Board would be fatal to its independence, and would mar the success of the experiment which is about to be tried. If it is indeed considered essential to appoint as chairman an officer of Government, we say appoint to that office one who shall devote his whole time to the work of the Board, who shall not hold any executive authority in the district, and shall not be subordinate to the Magistrate ; such an officer will be a colleague, and not a master, and his presence will not perhaps very seriously interfere with the independence of the Board.

Ladies and gentlemen, there remains for me to consider only the last recommendation referred to in the Resolution committed to my care, viz., that which has reference to the functions and powers of the proposed Local Boards. You recommend that the powers and functions of the existing committees should be increased in view of their amalgamation. The Lieutenant-Governor himself admits in the

circular letter to which I have referred several times, that it is the absence of all authority which must account for the inefficiency of the existing committees. The truth is, that all these committees are magnificent nonentities. They are reporting bodies. Neither the Road Cess Committee, nor the Municipal Committee in the mofussil can fix the cesses or the rates, or appoint their higher officers without reference to superior authority. Then we have got that greatest of all shams—the Educational Committee, which by its constitution is purely a consultative committee and is to assist the Magistrate with advice in matters relating to primary education. What we want is that the Road Cess Committee and the Municipal Committee should both have the power of fixing the rates and appointing their officers without interference from higher authority. Not merely the semblance, but the reality of power, should be conferred upon them, before they can be useful for any purpose. The Lieutenant-Governor is anxious to confirm and extend the powers of the Education Committees. What I would suggest, on behalf of the meeting, is that the powers which the Magistrate of the District now exercises, in reference to educational matters, should be transferred to the Local Boards. The Magistrate has really a great deal more to do than any human being with ordinary strength or energy is capable of. If there is to be decentralization in all else, why not relieve the Magistrate-Collector of those duties for which he cannot now find time, and which would be more efficiently performed by local bodies ?

These are, then, our views to the great question of Local Self-Government. Are they the views, let me ask, of only the inhabitants of Calcutta and its Suburbs, or do they represent the deliberate judgment of the country at large ? Now, gentlemen, meetings have been held in different parts of the country—at Pubna, Rajshahi, Bogra, Bankipur,

Chittagong and Santipur, and at all these meetings, these have been precisely the views which have found expression. Lord Brougham has truly remarked that in the voice of the people is heard the thunder of the Almighty, and I am sure the illustrious statesman who presides over Indian affairs, and who is so deeply imbued with the traditions of public life in England, will know how to deal with this unanimous expression of popular opinion. We have no Parliament, no accredited representative of the people, no august senators of the nation to plead, on our behalf, before the bar of English opinion. But for my part, I do not despair of the future. Ours is essentially a progressive Government. What were the dreams of our fathers have become realities with us, and what are our fondest hopes may yet become cherished privileges with those who will come after us and live under the beneficent influences of British rule. Who could have dreamt twelve years ago that it would be seriously proposed to concede to the people the great boon of Local Self-Government in so short a time ? I look upon the proposed concession as the first of a series of reforms to be effected in this direction. I regard the concession of Local Self-Government as the prelude, the precursor of national, ( may I venture to hope ? ) of imperial Self-Government. The seedling of liberty planted in the human soil has a tendency to shoot forth into a vast and umbrageous tree. There is development in all things ; progress is the law of nature. There is above all, an expansive force in the principle of liberty. May that principle grow and thrive till it has made itself felt in every department of Indian Administration. Whether the glorious consummation will take place soon, or whether it will be indefinitely postponed, must depend upon ourselves,—upon our enthusiasm and devotion to the interests of our country. The repeal of the Vernacular Press Act has taught you what may be effected by

agitation. My advice to you is—Agitate, Agitate, Agitate. You have yet to learn the great art of grumbling. When a great calamity or a terrible reverse overwhelms us, we calmly submit to our fate, and go straightway to Benares to effect our reconciliation with the superior gods. An Englishman, on the other hand, grumbles and complains, fights against the adverse fates, till his complaints have been remedied, or his grievance has been removed. The temperament of the Englishman in this respect is worthy of all imitation, and above all it is useful in the domain of political agitation. Ladies and gentlemen, have confidence in the sense of justice of the English people. England spent twenty crores of rupees to emancipate the Negro slaves. When Italy was struggling for her independence, England stretched out to her the hand of sympathy? Will she now refuse to her own dependency the great privilege of Self-Government? It is not, however, the institutions but rather the men that make a nation. The national character shapes the institutions of a people. A noble people, it has been truly remarked, can never have an ignoble government. It is for you to raise your countrymen to a higher intellectual and moral life, and then will your grievances be redressed, and the solid fabric of self-government be raised on the unchangeable basis of a nation's character, and on the deep and fervent faith, that by self-government, and through it alone, can we work out the destinies that are in store for us, under the control of England and the orderings of an over-ruling Providence.

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## THE RIPON MEMORIAL MEETING.

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*A public Meeting of the native inhabitants of Calcutta and its Suburbs was held at the Town Hall, on Thursday the 11th December 1884, with a view to vote an address to His Excellency the Marquis of Ripon, Viceroy and Governor-General of India, on the eve of his departure from India. Upwards of 8,000 men were present. His Highness the Maharaja of Cooch Behar was in the Chair. Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea supported the second resolution which ran as follows :—*

*“ That this Meeting views with great satisfaction the demonstrations that have been held in all parts of the country in honour of the retiring Viceroy and ventures to hope that His Excellency will regard them as the earnest of unabated confidence on the part of the Native community throughout India in his abilities as a ruler and as the expression of deep respect for his disinterested efforts to promote the welfare of the people of India ; and this Meeting, in bidding His Excellency farewell, begs to express the earnest hope that His Excellency will continue to retain in the repose of his own home a lively interest in the land and in the people whom he has loved so well.”*

Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea, in supporting the resolution, spoke as follows :—

I have great pleasure in supporting the resolution which has been so ably proposed, and seconded by my two leaders. We have met here to-night to join our voices with those of

our countrymen in other parts of the empire, to raise the chorus of grateful acclaim, in recognition of the distinguished services of the illustrious statesman who is about to retire from his high office. The present generation cannot recall to mind a spectacle so grand or so imposing which it was our lot to witness last week, when all Calcutta, laying aside for the moment the pursuit of business, or the still more ardent pursuit of pleasure, turned out with all the elaborate demonstrations of oriental loyalty and devotion to honour the Viceroy, who had become, in the eyes of the people, the incarnation of Justice and of that righteousness which exalteth a nation. It was a spectacle that was calculated to stimulate the inventive genius of the poet and of the artist, as I am sure it will baffle the descriptive powers of the future historian of India. Old men, hoary with age and bent down with the weight of years, cannot remember to have witnessed a scene which, in point of enthusiasm and devotion, rivals the loyal welcome which in olden times the people of Ajudhya accorded to the exiled Rama, on his return to his country and on his accession to the throne of his ancestors. So, too, modern Ajudhya pours forth its gratitude in manifestations of loyal welcome to the modern Rama, the protector of his people. A great deal has been said with reference to the character of this and other demonstrations. It has been urged that they do not represent the spontaneous movement of a great people ; but that they are the work of wire-pullers and of third-rate obscure agitators. I ask, where is that wire-puller, who, with the waive of his magical wand, can send down a nation on their knees, and extort from unwilling lips the accents of grateful praise ? Such a wire-puller would be a man of formidable potency ; he would be like some of those heroes of ancient times, whom the Greek States ostracised to ensure their own safety and to preserve the balance of the

constitution. There is no such wire-puller ; nor even such a clique of wire-pullers. The truth is that the whole nation has risen like one man in obedience to a common impulse to honour him who so richly deserves honour at our hands. Let no unworthy attempt be made to take away aught from the character of these demonstrations. Let not our critics demean to the propagation of that which is not true. Let them boldly meet the facts in the face, and learn to recognise their significance. What do these demonstrations imply ? They are the spontaneous homage of a grateful people. Was ever such homage rendered to a foreign ruler ? Our history is memorable with great events, with the stories of great wars, of great conquests, of great annexations. But point out to me a single passage, in the whole range of Indian history, which commemorates in so remarkable a manner the triumph of peace and of righteous principles, as it has been the lot of Lord Ripon to achieve. What is the secret of this grand national demonstration ? What is the mystery which underlies it ? What is the charm which has held spell-bound the heart of a great people ? The secret is easily explained. The mystery melts away before the gaze of the observant enquirer. It is the honesty of the ruler, the purity of his intentions, the loftiness of his aims and purposes, his deep sympathy with the people, his statesmanlike grasp of the situation, which have captivated all hearts and have awakened a nation's gratitude. We, orientals, are shrewd judges of character. Behind the graceful exterior, the profound bow, the courteous obeisance, there lurks the keen intelligence that is never at a loss to judge of character. We have had the Delhi Assemblage with its profuse expenditure and its still more profuse promises, but we were never for a moment at a loss to understand the real character of that demonstration. We regarded it then, and we regard it still, and distant

posterity will endorse the judgment, that it was the last of the brilliant series of fire-works which Benjamin Disraeli let off for the edification of the English people. We are not to be deluded by such shows, or by the mere empty trappings of power. We are no longer children. Thanks to beneficence of our rulers, we have long since passed that stage, and are now entering the period of vigorous adolescence. What we want is solid statesmanship founded upon the unchangeable principles of justice and equity. Such statesmanship we found in Lord Ripon, and hence it is that we respected him, that we honoured him, that we adored him. From the very outset Lord Ripon had a complete grasp of the situation and of the political wants and aspirations of our countrymen. Our Government is a bureaucracy, but faintly tempered by popular opinion. It is as old as this century, but within that time a mighty moral revolution has been effected. Great as has been the material development of the country, the moral revolution is completer still, and will constitute, I venture to think in the judgment of the impartial historian, England's noblest title to her imperial sway in India. English education and a Free Press have revolutionised the country. Those men who founded British supremacy in India, who had the courage to win an empire for themselves, and the sagacity to consolidate it, were never at a loss to understand the duties of their new situation and the responsibilities which it entailed upon them. Sir Charles Metcalfe, replying to a deputation that waited upon him to congratulate him upon his liberation of the Press, observed:—"Whatever might be the will of Almighty Providence with respect to the future government of India, it cannot be that we are permitted to be here merely to collect the taxes, to pay up the revenues, and to supply the deficiency. We are here for a higher and a nobler purpose,—to pour into the East the knowledge, the civilization, the arts and

the sciences of the West." In pursuance of this policy thus nobly vindicated, schools have been established all over the country, and a Free Press has been rapidly disseminating the Principles of Liberty. New ideas have been called forth into existence, new aspirations have been created; a moral revolution has been effected;—the grandest on record, which will throw into the shade the proudest achievements of Englishmen in other parts of the world. A year of Water-loos will not equal it. What could be a subject of more legitimate pride to Englishmen than to know that, under the auspices of their rule, and under the influences of their education, a great and ancient country which had been sunk in the deepest depths of ignorance and superstition, is rapidly recovering her former position and bids fair, once again, to be the home of civilisation, of knowledge, and of the arts and sciences. But the Government remains the same;—unchangeable alike in its traditions and principles. It was the same system of Government that was established by Warren Hastings; that was perpetuated by Amherst and Minto; that was emphasised by Lord Dalhousie, and that was followed in more recent times by Lord Mayo and Lord Northbrook. In the meantime popular aspirations had outgrown the Government, and a repressive rule had alienated the sympathies of the people. It was at such a time that Lord Ripon arrived. Having put an end to a tedious and inglorious war, His Excellency applied himself, with characteristic energy, to the question of domestic reform. We hear in these days a great deal about Russian ambition and of Russian advance in Central Asia. But with India contented and prosperous, with her countless millions at the beck of her English rulers, Russian invasion becomes a dream, a chimera, the phantom of an excited imagination. Russian invasion assumes the faint proportions of a bare possibility, only on the assumption of the existence

of disaffection in India. Let it once be granted that India is loyal and contented, unswerving in her devotion to the Imperial throne, and the spectre of Russian invasion which looms beyond the passes of the Hindoo Koosh, melts away into the distant horizon. The ruler who has cemented the loyalty of the people, and has evoked their deepest gratitude, has not only rendered a great service to the people of India, but is entitled to the lasting gratitude of his own countrymen. Lord Ripon has thus rendered a double service to India and to England. In the name of this two-fold service, I invite this great gathering of my countrymen to record their expression of deep gratitude to the retiring Viceroy. Well, one of the very first questions which Lord Ripon took up was that relating to Municipal reform. Referring to the importance of Municipal institutions, Mr. Gladstone has observed in one of his recent speeches that "they are the seedplots, around which and upon which habits of political thought and political capacity are formed throughout the country." It is unnecessary to enter into the merits of Lord Ripon's scheme of Local Self-Government; but this I will say, that the foundations have been laid, and we have to build the superstructure upon them. If we succeed in the matter of Local Self-Government, we have a strong case with which we may go up to the Government and invite them to extend the principles of Local Self-Government to the wider concerns of Provincial Administration. We might, in short, ask them to reconstitute the Provincial Councils and even the Supreme Council itself. I know not whether there are any honourable members present at this meeting; but if there be, I make my courteous bow to them before I proceed to make my onslaught upon the institution which they represent. These Legislative Councils are so many happy families which debate nothing, discuss nothing, but meet only to register the preordained decrees

of the Executive Government. They have not even the consoling reflection of being permitted, by means of interpellations, to go behind the acts of the executive Government. They are magnificent and gilded nonentities, very well suited perhaps to the conditions of a backward society, but utterly out of place among a keen and intelligent community such as ours. Now all this must be changed. If we are loyal to Local Self-Government, the attainment of national self-government becomes only a matter of time. But I have heard disappointment expressed by a certain journalist, whose utterances till lately were entitled to weight, with regard to the fruits of Local Self-Government. I would say to this journalist, and to all whom it may concern—"Let us wait and let us have patience—let us not anticipate in a day the fruits of a century." What are a few years in the lifetime of a nation? There is such a thing as growth in political institutions. What was the House of Commons at first, what is it now? What was at first a mere deliberative assembly, summoned by the will of the Sovereign, and dependant for its existence upon his will, became in the course of time the dictator and ruler of the Sovereign himself. The seeds have been sown by the hands of the most beneficent ruler whom India has ever had. They are entrusted to our care, our keeping, and our guardianship. Let us watch over them with tender and parental solicitude, and I am sure that under the providence of God, we shall reap a plentiful harvest. If ever India should become a self-governing country under the protectorate of England, the glory and the honour of that achievement will belong to Lord Ripon, and to him alone. In the same way the credit of the repeal of the Vernacular Press Act belongs Lord Ripon. The question of the repeal was left entirely to the discretion of the Viceroy, and on the 19th of January 1882—a day that

shall be memorable in the annals of Indian progress—the Act was removed from the statute-book. If Sir Charles Metcalfe claims at our hands the homage to which he is entitled as the liberator of the Indian Press, some measure of our gratitude is at least due to the restorer of the lost liberty of the Vernacular Press. Attempts are being made, in certain quarters to discredit the repeal of the Press Law. Extracts are from time to time published in the newspapers of this country, and which are telegraphed to newspapers in England—garbled extracts, as I have no hesitation in calling them—with a view to delude public opinion. But if the Anglo-Native Press is true to those traditions of sobriety and moderation, which have been handed down from the days of Hurrish Chunder Mookerjee, and which were emphasised by the example of the late illustrious Kristo Dass Paul, we need have no apprehensions with regard to the fortunes of the Native Press of India. I fear, gentlemen, I have been trespassing too much upon your time, I have been trying your patience (cries of—No, no, go on). It is unnecessary for me to enter into the varied measures of Lord Ripon's administration. The whole of his policy was based upon an earnest desire to carry out the gracious Proclamation of the Queen. What is this Proclamation? How do we regard it? What were the circumstances under which it was issued? These are important considerations, to which for a few moments I would venture to invite the attention of this meeting. The Proclamation is the *Magna Charta* of our rights and liberties. The Proclamation, the whole Proclamation, nothing but the Proclamation—is our watch-word, our battle-cry. It is the ensign of battle and the ensign of victory. It is the gospel of our political redemption. Mark the circumstances under which that memorable document was issued. The country had just passed through the horrors of the Mutiny;

the Queen had assumed the direct Government of the empire; for the first time the personal relationship between subject and sovereign had been established. It was under such circumstances, at such a time, upon such a historical occasion that her gracious Majesty the Queen was pleased to issue this Proclamation, and to add to the solemnity of the situation, the Almighty God was invoked to shower down His blessings upon this beneficent act of imperial favour. But years passed away, and the gracious promises of the Proclamation were not fulfilled, and as late as the year 1877, Lord Lytton, upon an important public occasion, declared that the Proclamation remained inadequately redeemed. There are those who would give worlds to recall the Proclamation, who would spend all their legal lore and their ingenuity, and if my lawyer friends will permit me, their legal perversity, in thinning away the beneficent provisions of this memorable declaration, and who would regard it as the expression of a barren sentiment, good for a ceremonial, but good for nothing else. These are the men who hold that the unchangeable principles of morality are bounded by climatic considerations—that what is just and proper in the temperate regions, is unjust and iniquitous in this hapless torrid zone. Against such a monstrous doctrine the conscience of mankind proclaims—against such principles, the enlightened sentiment of the civilized world pleads, and it is against such a pernicious doctrine that Lord Ripon entered his protest in words that shall be graven in our minds and in the minds of our children's children. Let me read to you his protest:—"To me it seems a very serious thing to put forth to the people of India a doctrine which renders worthless the solemn words of their Sovereign, and which converts her gracious promises which her Indian subjects have cherished for a quarter of a century into a hollow mockery as meaningless as the com-

pliments which form the invariable opening of an oriental letter. Sir Fitz—James Stephen, it seems to me, is not consistent, for he admits, in the course of the document which I have quoted, that the Proclamation binds the Government of India in regard to the native Princes and States, but in regard to Her Majesty's own immediate subjects, it is according to his view of no force whatever, it gives no pledge, and it lays down no principle. But if it binds the Government towards the Princes of India, it binds it to the people of India as well. The document is not a treaty ; it is not a diplomatic instrument ; it is a declaration of principles of Government which, if it is obligatory at all, is obligatory in respect to all to whom it is addressed. The document, therefore, to which Sir Fitz-James Stephen has given the sanction of his authority, I feel bound to repudiate to the utmost of my power. It seems to me to be inconsistent with the character of my Sovereign and with the honour of my country ; and if it were once to be received and acted upon by the Government of England, it would do more than anything else could possibly do to strike at the root of our power and to destroy our just influence. Because that power and that influence rest upon the conviction of our good faith more than upon the valour of our soldiers and the reputation of our arms. I have heard to-day with no little surprise a very different argument. The Hon'ble Mr. Thomas, in his speech, in which he endeavoured to stir up the bitterness of a controversy which was dying out, and which was approaching a settlement, and to fan again the dying embers of race animosity, has asked.—Was there ever a nation which retained her supremacy by the righteousness of her laws ? I have read in a book, the authority of which the Hon'ble Mr. Thomas will admit, that righteousness exalteth a nation, and my study of history, which has not been limited, has led me to the con-

clusion that it is not by force of her armies or by the might of her soldiery that a great empire is permanently maintained; but that it is by the righteousness of her laws, by her respect for the principles of justice. To believe otherwise appears to me to assume that there is not a God in Heaven who rules over the affairs of men, and who can punish injustice and iniquity in nations as surely as he can in the individuals of which they are composed. It is against doctrines like these that I desire to protest, and it is against principles of this description that the gracious Proclamation of the Queen was directed. So long, then, as I hold the office which I now fill, I shall conduct the administration in this country in strict accordance with the policy which has been enjoined upon me by my Queen and my Government."

The excellence of Lord Ripon's policy does not, indeed, consist in this measure or in that, but in the distinctly elevated moral tone which he imparted to the entire administration of the Empire. There was a distinctly forward movement along the whole line towards a definite goal, the path to which was illumined by that inspiration which is begotten of sympathy. There was no diplomacy, no political jugglery, no *leyeremain*, no Delhi assemblages to be followed by Madras famines, but everything was bright, clear, transparently honest. It is not for me to anticipate the verdict of history; but if I am permitted to take a forecast of things future, this I will say without a moment's hesitation, that when the present shall have vanished into the ever-receding past, when the animosities of the present hour shall have given place to the dominance of the historic judgment, then the amplest justice will be rendered to Lord Ripon, and in the illustrious musterroll of Indian statesmen, he will take his place by the side of a Bentinck and a Canning. Lord Ripon has enthroned himself in the

hearts of the people such as no other Indian ruler had before done, his word is more potent for good than have ever been the words of kings and emperors, and he will stand forth before posterity as the prophet-king of Anglo Indian history, for he sought to govern the people, not so much with the aid of the material appliances of the great civilized Power of which he was the chief and the representative; but with that moral domination, which represents the completest form of rule which man can assert over man. Lord Ripon has consecrated British rule with the celestial touch of Christian benignity. He has uplifted the Empire to a higher level of moral grandeur, he has surrounded the throne of the Queen-Empress with the greatest bulwark which it can enjoy—the affectionate gratitude of a contented people. Let the Russians come, if they may; let them be assisted by all the gallantry and the martial heroism of the fierce hordes of Central Asia; so long as there are Ripons to rule over us, so long as the policy which he has initiated is maintained and upheld, the rolling wave of Russian invasion will be driven back behind the passes of the Hindoo Koosh, and the throne of the Empress-Mother, planted safe in the affections of a grateful people, will be our rallying-point, the symbol of our unity, of our loyalty and our devotion to British supremacy. Your Reception Committee have resolved to raise a suitable Memorial in honour of the retiring Viceroy. I wish them God-speed in this noble endeavour. But whether your Memorial be of marble or of brass, Lord Ripon will live in the imperishable pages of history with a lustre all his own. The most suitable Memorial which you can raise in his honour is to consecrate your lives towards the extension and consolidation of that policy which Lord Ripon has bequeathed as a legacy to India and a legacy to England. England, I am sure, will do her duty in this matter.

Britain, the august mother of free nations, will extend her justice and her beneficence to her great dependency. I invite you to perform your part of the duty, and, unless I am greatly mistaken in the character of my countrymen, and in the significance of this grand demonstration, I may assure myself of a cordial response. It now remains for us to bid farewell to Lord Ripon. The blessings of a nation attend him to his Western home ! What are crowns, what are diadems, what are earthly possessions in comparison with the profuse and spontaneous love of a great people ? It is our earnest hope and prayer that he may long be spared to devote himself to the furtherance of the honour of his country, and the promotion of the true interests of that people, who have loved him with a love such as they have never accorded to a foreign ruler.

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# EXTRACT FROM THE GUP. & GOSSIP.

18th June 1884.

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## OPEN LETTERS TO PUBLIC PERSONS.

ON PUBLIC QUESTIONS

BY SHETTJEE SAHIBJEE ESQ., B.A., B.L.

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### TO BABU SURENDRA NATH BANERJEA.

SIR—You have been a prominent figure for some years in the political history of your country. Not a question of national importance but your countrymen have heard your exposition of it with respect. On more than one occasion you have led a great forlorn hope. Esteem, admiration and love are yours. Your name is a household word. It is not of Babu Surendranath Banerjea the Indian people love to speak. They do not look upon you as a god of Olympus or a Rishi of the Himalayas. Indeed, Sir, you are nearer to their hearts than ever a god is likely to be. But you are what a god can never be to man—you are a member of each and every family circle in India. The Educated and the Ignorant, the Reis and the Rayet alike, have adopted you in the bosom of their family, and the richest treasures of domestic affection are lavished on your head. You are neither mistered nor babooed, your name is not uttered with bated breath. But people love to pause upon the syllables of simple “Surendranath.” Last year at one of the many public meetings held in Upper India for your liberty, I heard a Kashmiri Pandit, a man of years and honour, but

incapable of construing one word of English into his mother tongue--heard this grave and elderly man sob while he referred to your imprisonment. Tears, salt and bitter tears chocked his utterance as he cried--"what have they done with our dearest brother? Our Surendranath is in jail!" And a like passion of agony was wrung from every Indian heart, and universal mourning was observed throughout the land.

I am not going to question you, Sir, on the secret of this immense success. Misfortune, which is generally a harsh step-mother, has been your very beautiful nurse. The man of genius, the great soul, brushes aside the huge phantom of fate with a wave of his hand. The greatest poets have triumphed over the cruellest fortunes.

"Most wretched men,

"Are cradled into poetry by wrong :

"They learn in suffering what they teach in song."

And thus, Sir, it was with you. A waspish and crochety Lieutenant-Governor took into his head to magnify a blunder into a crime, and with that majestic tyranny so characteristic of Anglo-Indian Infallibles, with a stroke of the pen he scratched your character and commission away. It was, certainly, a great blow, a merciless and cruel blow under which all India writhed. It was a death-blow to your career in the public service. But, Sir, you soon demonstrated that your disqualification from the public service only multiplied your opportunities of serving the public. You were no longer cribbed and cabined and confined within the dead walls of Government Gazettes. You were no longer a foot-ball for the kicks of lubberly collectors and secretaries. You wisely took heart of the disgrace which was really your grace.

As journalist and a public speaker you have rendered invaluable service to your country. All public questions you

have treated with eloquence and judgment. You have written wisely, boldly, and fearlessly. You have ruthlessly exposed shows. You have held a rod of terror over military ruffians and bellicose civilians. More than any other man you have laboured to bring your countrymen into political unity. You have, doubtless, now and again fallen into error; but your very errors have been prolific of result. For example, carried away by the sense of the supposed wrong done to the religious feelings of your countrymen, you indulged in strong language at the expense of a Judge of a High Court. I confess that your provocation was great. This man had come to Calcutta with a "puff" from a Liberal Ministry. He had promised to Mr. Bright, to make the interests of the Indians his own. But like the Chameleon Mr. Norris changed his skin and grew by what he fed on—Anglo-Indian scurrilities became his food and drink. His levity unbecoming in any man, but unpardonable in a High Court Judge, the grossness of his jokes and his violent partizanship with his rebellious compatriots, these were legitimate themes for public comment and public derision. But to compare this light man, this witless judge, to Jeffries was doing him too much honour. Jeffries was a bloody executioner, but he was a man of varied learning and great accomplishment. He was a man of frenzy, but his frenzy was deep-set and resolute, a servant to his will. Mr. Norris might be swayed by the frenzy of Jeffries, but his ridiculous irresolution would never qualify him to be a leader of men. Even in the most righteous cause, the sword of blood would fall from his faint hand amid a shower of woman's tears.

But Jeffries or Norris, some one had to be sacrificed on the altar of the Ilbert Bill. The editor of the *Bengalee*, the Secretary of the Indian Association, and the friend of Lal Mohan Ghose, you, Sir, were selected for sacrifice to

appease the wrath of indigo-gods. The whole country thundered forth its indignation at this outrage on its most deserving son. Every one felt that it was not a judicial but a political prosecution; and every one realized that it was no prosecution, but persecution of a patriot in whose incarceration the liberties of the whole Indian nation were sought to be imprisoned. You must have thanked God on your knees, Sir, that you were selected as an object of sacrifice, for the object of the sacrifice became an instrument of powerful good for the people of your love.

On, Sir, in your nob', self-sacrificing work. The great dreams you have dre., the great hopes you have cherished for your country may yet be realized. You are in the prime of youth; fresh to your work as if you went at it yesterday, you god-like, dare the future, and who can prophecy but that the future may yet be all that you would make it? I am no prophet, I am only a chronicler of the times; if history repeats itself, this great country is about to penetrate the mystery of a new and nobler cycle.

SHETTJEE SAHEBJEE.

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